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WAR

by JOHN MACVANE

& DIPLOMACY

IN

NORTH AFRICA

CASABLANCA

ORAN

ALGIERS

TUNIS

TRIPOLI

WAR AND DIPLOMACY
IN NORTH AFRICA



THE AUTHOR

WAR AND DIPLOMACY IN NORTH AFRICA

by

JOHN MACVANE

War Correspondent, National Broadcasting Company

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TO LUCY MACVANE
who had the harder task

THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED IN
COMPLETE CONFORMITY WITH THE
AUTHORIZED ECONOMY STANDARDS

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PREFACE

IN the dim and distant past an intelligence officer at the Air Ministry one day received a request for figures on Germany's monthly production of aircraft. He was a careful and honest officer with excellent information and he speedily submitted what he believed to be the exact figures. A day or two later the estimate was returned to him with a note saying that these figures were considered far too high and would he please revise them downward by at least fifty per cent. The R.A.F. officer replied that in all conscience he could not submit a false estimate. His original figures, he said, were the only true measure of Germany's plane production. A short time afterwards the officer was transferred to a lonely R.A.F. post in the Middle East. When official figures on German plane production were next given in Parliament, they represented fifty per cent of the truth as this official—who was in a position to know—had estimated it.

The British public was relieved that German rearmament had not reached a dangerous speed. The Government remained happy and secure. Only the officer who had exchanged his important post in London for the sandstorms and flies of a desert country was left to reflect on the danger of telling the truth.

Since the bad old days of hypocrisy and complacency have been, we hope, relegated to the limbo of forgotten things by a war that has underlined the need for honest thinking in both national and international affairs, I have attempted to make this book one hundred per cent of the truth as I know it, without fear that irate officialdom will demand a revision downward of fifty per cent.

In North Africa there was much to criticize and I have not hesitated to do precisely that. There was also much to praise. I have not refrained from praise where praise was due.

Before we began our daily broadcasts, Army Signal Corps engineers used to do a "talk-up" on the North African

transmitters to establish contact with America and Britain. They frequently used the phrase "North Africa testing."

The North African campaign was a test of both the political and the military ability of Britain and America. It was a test of our intentions on the Continent and our ability to carry them out. For six months the whole world watched North Africa with hope and anxiety.

Whatever we may accomplish on the Continent, the seeds of our endeavour were plainly planted and brought to first growth in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. That was as obvious to the millions of oppressed peoples who still live under Axis control as it was to reporters on the scene.

To the majority of American correspondents and officials who were there, American foreign policy as it developed in North Africa seemed headed on a tangent that would one day carry us straight into disaster. The political tangle, so contrasting with the straightforward development of military success, once again emphasized that half-truths and neglect of facts are no true basis for a foreign policy.

To form a just estimate of our accomplishments and failures in North Africa and to decide how future allied policy shall be conducted in Europe, citizens of both America and Britain need facts, the raw material for thought. It is partly to supply this need that this book has been written.

J. MACV.

STARCROSS YACHT CLUB

STARCROSS, DEVON, ENGLAND

June 1943

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The Author

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4. Mr Murphy gets a medal—General Eisenhower officiating.
5. "Near Port Lyautey. . . . It is a quiet pleasant spot."
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9. In one day, American planes caught and blasted into the sea twenty-five German transports carrying vital supplies.
10. General Anderson (left), Commander of the British First Army, with the Brigadier-General Staff who explained the last offensive to reporters.
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14. In Tunis—"People saw us and began cheering and shouting."
15. General de Gaulle (right) shakes hands with General Giraud at Casablanca.

One large folding Map ; two smaller Maps in text.

ROSÉ D'ALGÉRIE

"*I*T's all too complicated," the Colonel said. The Colonel had been slightly drunk for two days. He banged the palm of his big hand on the table and repeated, "It's too complicated. It's a hell of a way to make war."

The lights in the "Oasis" restaurant were dim. The "Oasis" windows look out over the Boulevard Carnot on the edge of Algiers Harbour. Allied troops had been in Algiers for three weeks, but the "Oasis" had not yet been able to get enough black cloth to black out its windows properly. The proprietor turned out most of the restaurant's lights and hoped the glow wouldn't show through the curtains when German bombing planes came over the harbour.

A half-dozen overworked waiters skimmed among the tables like black-coated, white-chested swallows. In the smoky dimness of the big room, they appeared only now and then. They were not good waiters. Even if they had been, they could not have served the jammed restaurant properly.

So the Colonel banged his empty glass on the stained cloth and yelled "Garçon. Some more vin." He might as well have tried to stop a swallow in midflight by whistling to it.

Sloane, the government official, carefully stroked his black moustache and said: "Colonel, You are undoubtedly right. The problem that confronts us is one that needs careful study and mature deliberation. We must so organize our efforts that military action will be aided by every political step forward that we make. You are quite right and I heartily agree with you in judging the present situation as a confused one. Yet I venture to suggest, sir, that by careful study of all the related factors, we shall in the end be able to sort them out and adopt a course of action that will further our aim—an Allied victory."

He lent emphasis to his periods by thrusting forward his head and speaking as though he were addressing an audience instead of three dinner companions.

The Colonel's chin had fallen down on his chest and he was staring fixedly at the dreary remains of the vegetable plate that had been the dinner's main course.

"It's not like war," he muttered. "Not at all like war. What is

war anyway? I've been in wars before you were born. You're on a battlefield. You get an order to take a trench or a hill. You go and fight and take the trench. That's all there is to it. War is simple. You bring up supplies. You arrange your troops. You move forward when you are told to. But this—what's happening in North Africa—is too complicated. I don't know what we're doing—or why. Who's for us? Who's against us? What are we trying for? Who's trying to stop us. Who is helping us? Do any of you know?"

Lowrie, the official who had lived so long in France, and Murdock, the correspondent, both shook their heads.

Lowrie said, "I think, Colonel, that about all I can say is that French politics have always been complicated. Think of the number of parties in the French Chamber of Deputies before the war. Remember the complicated mesh of influence and intrigue that surrounded every military and diplomatic move. Remember the strings that led from the Wilhelmstrasse into the French Cabinet by way of the boudoir. Remember how it all ended in the drivelling idiocy of Vichy.

"Think too of the fact that none of us here at this table have any idea of what policy is intended in Washington and London—if they do have any policy. So we are all men working in a nightmare towards an end we can't even guess. We are working with the French, but what the French are working for we don't know. We only know that we must co-operate; and smile even when we are quite sure that the man we are smiling at is in the process of sticking a knife in our backs. Sure it's complicated. We have to guess at what will help an Allied victory and help the real interests of France. And when we are sure and prepare to take action, someone else comes along and says, 'Oh, no, my boy, you're entirely wrong. You must do the exact opposite.'"

The little, insignificant-looking man who was sitting at the next table, just behind Murdock, did not understand English very well. He tried to look nonchalant as he wriggled in his chair. He looked pointedly at the other side of the room and managed to back his chair a few inches more towards Murdock.

Murdock said: "Don't look now, but we've got an uninvited guest behind me."

A waiter flitted by and the Colonel grabbed him by the coat-tail. "Look here, you," said the Colonel, "bring me another bottle of wine. Some of that rosy wine,"

"Un moment Capitaine, some rose wine. Just un moment."

Sloane cleared his throat. He was infinitely more intelligent than you would have judged from the fact that most of his comments at times like this merely underscored facts that all admitted.

"To be more explicit about our admittedly complicated situation," he asserted, "let us use a simile and compare it to the rosy wine we are about to drink. We have all worked in various European countries. The chief wines, as we know, are red wine and white wine. Both are good in their place. Yet here in Algeria we find one of the tastiest of the vins ordinaires is rosy—neither white nor red. So here in North Africa we have a situation that is neither clearly political nor clearly military—neither good white nor good red. You might make rosy wine by mixing white and red. To unsort rosy wine into its white and red components would be unfeasible if not impossible. Yet that is the problem that has been set for us."

"It's too complicated," the Colonel muttered. He carefully wound his fingers around the bottle the waiter had just brought and poured the pink liquid into his glass.

Murdock said: "I think I'm the luckiest of us all. I only have to try to write about it. You have to do something about it."

The little man behind was now leaning his head almost over Murdock's shoulder in his frantic efforts to keep track of the conversation.

Murdock went on in a casual tone: "I think it is fine that we have just sent ninety-three divisions into Tunisia. I understand on the highest authority that the British Navy has just sunk the Tirpitz, the Scharnhorst and the Gneisenau in the middle of Lake Michigan and the great Admiral Darlan can only be described as the greatest 'astardbay' in recent history."

The little man had dropped all pretence. His head touched Murdock's shoulder. Murdock said: "I don't like police spies. In fact I am quite sure that I DO NOT LIKE SPIES."

The little man's head jerked up and he busied himself with the cup of coffee that had been untasted on his table for the last half-hour. He was not very clever at his work. He did not understand English very well. He was so obviously underpaid, so obviously what he was, a cringing, furtive little man who made his poor living out of listening to conversations in bars and restaurants, at keyholes of hotel rooms, that he could have been working only for the French police. Probably he had been working for them for years—under the Republic; under Vichy; it made little difference. There were still the conversations to listen to, a living to make. Republican, Fascist,

German, American; all were grist to the spy's two-thousand-francs-a-month mill. What happened to the notes he handed in every day, he probably never knew. But the notes were handed in at the right time every day; and what mattered if the Republic or Gestapo read them over, French Fascist or Mussolini Fascist?

Algiers was filled with far better spies, agents working under the direct orders of Germany and Italy. The Axis had had a long time—two and a half years—to build up its information service in North Africa. Sometimes a few were captured. But more remained.

The little police spy was clumsy and his very clumsiness irritated Murdock. The reporter tapped the spy on the shoulder and said loudly in English, accenting every word: "I hate police spies. I hate police spies."

The little man hastily got up and went out of the room. He could make his notes outside. He had done a day's work, anyway, enough to satisfy his superiors. "Darlan astardbay." He would have to look the word up in his English dictionary.

Through the smoky room cut the faint sound of an air-raid siren. It was more like the Paris than the London sirens. It was more extreme, higher and lower, than the English raid warnings. Murdock reflected that perhaps sirens indicated the temperament of a people, French temperament going higher and lower than the English. He wondered what American sirens were like; probably struck an urgent, sustained note. And the Berlin sirens? Were they a Wagnerian trump of doom, the mournful echo of the German soul for ever foreseeing its own frustration, a German world crashing to destruction to the sound of infinite cymbals and infinite kettledrums? Murdock wondered whether the Germans didn't even find a sort of gloomy, romantic satisfaction in the Allied bombs that smashed their cities, a feeling, amid the fires and the thunder of high explosives, that their sense of frustration was again being justified.

Few people in the "Oasis" paid attention to the siren. Some got their checks and slipped out. The waiters hurried a little faster. They neglected the customers a little more.

"What we need is discipline," said the Colonel. "Discipline on the parade ground. Discipline on the battlefield. Discipline here. I never met a problem discipline wouldn't solve."

"And discipline we must have," cut in Sloane, "discipline coupled with intelligent understanding of the situation that confronts us. No endeavour, no exertion, requiring as it must the highest level of discipline, must be spared if we are to achieve our ends."

"If we knew what our ends were," Lowrie added.

"At any rate, military man and civilian must work together," the Colonel went on. "We must work as a team, each relying on the other, as on the battlefield each man must rely on the men to his right and to his left."

Sloane said: "You can count on our one hundred per cent support, sir. This has been a most enlightening and instructive conversation. We will have problems with the French, problems with our Allies, but with teamwork, discipline and co-operation I am sure that we shall achieve eventual victory."

"I think I'll be getting along," said Murdock. "I've got some work to do. Thanks for the meal."

Half-way down the marble stairs was the check-room. He picked up the uniform cap of his correspondent's uniform. Murdock wondered how long it would be before he could again wear civilian clothes.

Then he heard the bomb coming—the long swish changing into the express train that means it is going to be close. He dived head first down the stairs on his stomach. He had banged up against the wall at the bottom by the time the explosion arrived.

The building shook, and in the silence afterwards broken glass tinkled. The guns flared up in a frenzy of anger. Murdock and the three or four others on the floor picked themselves up, brushed themselves off. The voice of the guns died away to an irritated muttering.

Along the empty street people huddled in dark doorways. Behind some houses, the edges of a fire flickered up in the wind. Murdock walked quickly. The dust of the explosion was settling.

Suddenly the guns began banging again as he crossed Bresson Square that was once Aristide Briand Square. Two soldiers ran past Murdock.

"Silly fools," thought the reporter. "Probably never been in a real air-raid in their lives. Don't know that it doesn't matter whether you're running or walking if the bomb is going to hit you."

The soldiers were running like men who were frightened and running for their lives. Such was the effect of their fear that Murdock too began to run.

CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND FOR INVASION

THE cable looked innocent enough. It merely said: "JACQUES ARRIVING ON EIGHTH." The Vichy censor passed it without a second thought among the pile of cables on his desk. It was not among the telegrams he handed in for investigation by his superiors and the Gestapo official who occupied the cubby-hole office upstairs.

But in France and North Africa that innocuous telegram started activity that was to risk the lives of several thousand French men and women. For to Frenchmen who knew, that cable meant that United States troops would land on the coast of North Africa some time on November 8th, 1942. The landing had been tentatively fixed for an earlier date. Now the day was at last decided.

In the garden of a villa in the south of France, a tall, grey-moustached French general was walking. It was still warm and the scent of late flowers was in the lazy Midi air.

Once in a while the gaunt figure paused and leaned on his cane. He had much to think about. These past three years had been eventful ones for General Giraud.

At the beginning of the war, command of one of France's armies. Instead of battle, months of waiting and inaction while the morale of the men fell lower and lower. At least on his front Giraud could not see the Germans. On other fronts, French troops had been ordered not to fire at the Germans they could see a few hundred yards away. It might provoke reprisals.

The *drôle de guerre*, the phoney war, had begun. In Paris a political struggle was in progress.

Fifth Columnists with unimpeachable social backgrounds and the moral standards of woodlice were busy in the *salons* frequented by social climbers in the Government. The Countess de Portes may have sprung from the obscurity of the Marseilles fish-piers, but her title and her ability to hold her own in any company made her a natural link between

politics and society. Old families with aristocratic names who followed Charles Maurras, editor of the Royalist *Action Française*, applauded his attacks against the Republic, against Democracy. Yet no one section of the French was united. Some Royalists believed in fighting Germany. High society read *Le Figaro* as well and applauded the patriotic line of Wladimir d'Ormesson, or de Kerillis in the *Époque*.

The Right was split. Marin, long leader of the chief Right group in the Chamber, was for the war. Flandin, ex-premier from the Centre, was against the war. Reynaud, of the Centre, believed in more vigorous prosecution. Bonnet, of the Radicals, had tried to delay France's declaration of war and had been accused of devious relations with Abetz, the famous German agent. Yet he remained a Cabinet Minister. Daladier, whom someone once nicknamed the "Bull with the Eyes of a Cow," was of Bonnet's party. He wanted to fight the war, but he was haggard by his old fault, indecision. So many people said so many different things and he would have to please them all somehow if he wanted to hold power and if France was to win the war. On the Socialist Left, Blum wanted to fight. His colleague, Faure, who swayed an important section of the Socialists, wanted to negotiate a peace.

Communist deputies were in jail and the working class was split. The big industrialists, their bosses, were mostly against the war. The spectre of Communism had been used against them with good effect, and in quiet talks big French bankers and heads of industrial organizations like the Comité des Forges had gained from their opposite numbers in Germany the impression that Goering and some of the others were "reasonable" men and that Hitler after all didn't mean all he said.

Walking in his rose-garden that autumn day, General Giraud may have reflected that even the hierarchy of the French Army had been torn by politics. General Gamelin, for instance, had been the choice of the Radical-Socialist Daladier. He had sat firmly behind his desk as Commander-in-Chief of the French and British armies. Yet to some in the army he had been anathema. Did he not represent the free-thinkers, the schoolmasters, the Masons, the petty tradesmen, the small property owners, the bulk of the

French people, who, while they are mostly Catholic in religion, have been anti-clerical in thought. They are what remains from the Jacobinism of the Revolution a hundred and fifty years ago. It is largely because of them that France, until the outbreak of war, remained one of the few countries on the Continent of Europe where free thought and expression were possible.

Against Gamelin—one section of the army was backing General Georges. He had the support of the Clerical Royalist officers and the Church. In the big room in the Ministry of War where French, British and American correspondents heard a military spokesman explain the communiqués that so often read: "Rien à signaler sur l'ensemble du front," retired generals fumed against Gamelin. Gamelin, they said, was reluctant to use French troops and war material against Russia. Gamelin, they said, was on the Left—the most damnable insult one French general could give another.

At the front, French generals were more outspoken. Some had been heard to say that France's real fight was against Russia. "Come to an understanding with Germany," they said, "and we can send men to Finland at once."

Of course, there was no hope of removing Gamelin while the war continued at its present pace. But if the French armies should suffer some military defeats? That would be the moment to put Georges in control.

Good sound men were what the French General Staff wanted—men who knew how to take orders—men who realized the value of the defensive.

Giraud was well spoken of within the army. The French public had never heard his name. But in the draughty offices of the War Ministry, Giraud was said to be one to watch in the future. "If the war goes on long enough, he may outstrip both Georges and Gamelin," they said, and over a dry Martini at the Crillon, American military experts agreed. "The French Army is the finest in the world," the Americans said, "and remember Hitler has never come up against a first-class army."

The French General Staff, like so many other large organizations, resented new ideas. After the battle was lost,

it became the fashion in and out of the army to blame civilian politicians of the Third Republic for France's unpreparedness. The same termites who helped eat away the foundations of France, with their only excuse the slogan "Better Hitler than Communism," were the first to pin the defeat on the Third Republic. Yet while they tried to raise the rickety scaffolding of a Fascist state on the ruins, none dared remember that a heavy share of the blame lay with the French General Staff.

When the Chamber voted money for the French armed forces, it was the General Staff that allocated the funds. It was the General Staff who decided on spending billions of francs on the Maginot Line, in preference to the tanks an offensive policy would have required. It was the General Staff, not the often criticized Socialist Air Minister Cot, who decided that former wars had been won by infantry not aeroplanes, and that therefore it was logical to spend their money on more infantry, not on more planes.

Up at the front, Colonel Charles de Gaulle commanded a tank regiment. He was one of the two or three greatest authorities in the world on armoured warfare. The German General Staff had studied his books. The Germans admitted they had seized on his ideas and, ironically enough, the panzer divisions of Rommel, Guderian and the others that swept through France were modelled and handled as de Gaulle had suggested to the French General Staff.

The generals who controlled France's preparations for war pooh-poohed de Gaulle's plans, stuck them in the file, and forgot them. De Gaulle they kept busy with active work in the field, where he would have little time to make irritating suggestions about the war of the future.

As General Giraud paced up and down the garden of the villa, he realized that the choice he was about to make was the same choice de Gaulle had made nearly two and a half years before. To accept defeat and follow the orders of the aged Marshal Pétain—or to take arms, become an *émigré* and fight to restore France.

Giraud remembered de Gaulle. May 10th; the blitzkrieg. De Gaulle had led the only successful French tank action of the campaign near Abbeville. De Gaulle, promoted to general by Daladier, had been the youngest general in the

French Army, then a Cabinet member and Giraud's chief, as Under-secretary of State for War directly under Premier Reynaud.

In the deluge, Giraud had replaced Corap and tried to block the gap in the dyke through which the grey torrent poured. It had all come too late. Giraud had been a prisoner before the end of May. There had been Weygand, with the mind of a good chief of staff, a brilliant assistant but lacking the daring, the independent thought, the initiative of a great military leader; Pétain—preparing, expecting, almost eager for defeat.

For Giraud, then, had followed months of isolation in the mountain fortress of Koenigstein. But he had had reports of the end, the disgraceful capitulation at Bordeaux when Pétain and the termites—clever, persuasive Chautemps, Laval and the rest—had succeeded in making a French government break France's pledged word, break the promise not to sign a separate peace. Giraud was glad he had not been there.

At least de Gaulle had kept the flame of France's honour burning. In France itself, men had been struck dumb and blinded by bewilderment—and the only sounds that had come out had been the little squeals and the scuttling of the rats from the cold hearth of Vichy. But outside France de Gaulle, the only member of the French Government to continue the fight, had snapped his gaunt, rawboned frame to the salute in front of London's statue of Marshal Foch and declared to the world that France had lost a battle but had not lost the war. His voice had been a lone voice but a clear one. It had been heard. Equatorial Africa had rallied. Catroux, one of France's top-ranking generals and colonial administrators, had placed himself at de Gaulle's service. Eboué had proved that a patriotic son of France need not have a white skin. D'Argenlieu, superior of the French Carmelite monks turned navy officer, had heard the call. So had Auboyneau, liaison officer for Admiral Godefroy's squadron in Alexandria, who was afterwards to become chief of the Fighting French naval forces while Admiral Godefroy's ships and men were idling away the years at anchor.

There had been more, several thousands more. Inside

France a few bitter men and women had listened to de Gaulle's voice. His French had been as incisive, as difficult to translate, as the Latin of Tacitus. Yet Frenchmen had hung on his words. The first few hundreds had become thousands, the thousands millions, and the Germans, totalling up the bill of sentries stabbed in the back, ammunition trains derailed, industrial machines sabotaged—had invented a new word "Gaullistes." The little curs in Vichy had yelped the name forth, in the accents of native-born Frenchmen and in the rounded periods of academy French.

Giraud remembered his escape from Koenigstein, down the rope, the wandering in disguise, the meeting, the hurried trip through Switzerland.

De Gaulle had invited him to join the Fighting French. But it had all been so new. Giraud had lost touch with the changes inside France. He had reported to his military superior, Marshal Pétain, and as a good officer had said that he would obey him. Then had come retirement in the little villa, the growing realization that unless something happened soon France was lost for ever.

What to do? Some soul-searching was in progress among the military hierarchy. Perhaps Giraud's prestige could swing some of the army officers over to the idea of resistance. After all, resistance had many facets. The de Gaullists were organizing and fighting. They all, from Croix de Feu to Communist, knew they were risking everything in a cause that might be lost. Yet now a German victory looked less certain. It would be humiliating for the Army to admit that de Gaulle had been right. It was too much to expect that divisional, corps and army generals should serve under a brigadier-general. Perhaps Giraud could solve the difficulty. He might move at the right time to keep control of the uprising that seemed inevitable. The Army must not let the uprising get out of hand. Since it was inevitable, the Army must direct it. Those were some of the points Giraud had heard.

Then had come the first, discreet approach by the Americans. The plan had been unfolded slowly. At first, Giraud had been angry. In confidence, he had said to French associates: "This American scheme of landing in North

Africa is stupid. It is too soon. I told them they must not start without my permission. In the summer of 1943 I, General Giraud, will have organized an uprising in France that will sweep the Germans out of our country. I, Giraud, will issue the call and all France will follow me as one man. I will retake Metz and open the way for America and Britain to carry the war into Germany itself."

Giraud had never been slow to recognize his own merit. In his period of retirement at the villa he had not tried to keep in touch with opinion inside the occupied zone of France. For the most part he had seen army officers, for he distrusted civilians, especially civilian politicians. The possibility that he might try to sound out public opinion throughout France had never occurred to him. Public opinion had never figured in his life of campaign, barrack, tent, parade ground and garrison any more than public opinion would figure in the life of a monk. Giraud was a five-star general, approved by his colleagues. Surely France would follow where Giraud chose to lead it. The Americans had shown a fitting sense of his importance when they had chosen him as the man to be approached.

But as he stumped up the garden path, Giraud still shook his head and muttered, "Too soon. Too soon."

Suddenly he stopped. Along the path to meet him came a French officer in civilian clothes. He was blond and youthful-looking, but he had campaigned with Giraud in Morocco. Like Giraud, he had been in prison. Unlike Giraud, it had been Vichy police who had imprisoned him, the charge, a suspicion of working against the Germans in North Africa. Like Giraud, too, he had only one guiding principle, one prime motive—the French Army.

The officer clicked his heels and came to attention. Giraud raised his hand in greeting, "Well, captain."

"*Mon général*, American and British forces supported by both the British and American Navies will land in North Africa on the morning of November 8th. The convoys are already on the way."

"*Diable*," exclaimed Giraud. "On the way."

For perhaps a minute Giraud was silent. Then he shrugged his shoulders. His decision was taken. To the officer he said: "When do we start?"

Many books have been written to explain why France was defeated in the spring of 1940. Responsibility for that defeat was widespread. One very *réel* reason was that France was too close to Germany. Who of us can say that if Britain or the United States had occupied France's geographical position in Europe, the same thing might not have happened to them?

Internal strife and disunion, the struggle between capital and labour, between isolationist and internationalist; anti-Semitism; the clash between those who wistfully or viciously hoped—with Order as their watchword—for a State in which the few would control the many and the Church would give its benign sanction to the arrangement, and those who believed in the right of the individual to assume responsibility for his own destiny—all these frictions would have been stimulated by Germany until the flame started in Britain or America as it did in France.

France lost the battle for many reasons. But few of us who made that pilgrimage to defeat down the road to Bordeaux had any doubt that treachery would be found among the reasons when history had time to sort them out.

The soldier on the steps of the Bourse du Travail in Bordeaux was sure of it, too, just after he had heard Pétain's surrender broadcast. The soldier said: "*Nous sommes trahis.*" (We are betrayed).

To correspondents, a part of the treachery had been apparent. During the first part of the war, Pétain, then French Ambassador in Madrid, had kept in close contact with the German Ambassador, the enemy of his country.

An informant who had once been on intimate terms with Pétain gave me the key to his character. "In a man of fifty," my informant said, "ambition is natural and fitting. In a man of eighty-five, ambition is indecent."

Now Pétain, who was known as a defeatist in the first world war, had achieved his ambition—power, control of France. And he used his white hair, the memories of Verdun, the honours the Third Republic had given him, to cover up what in another man would have been branded by the world as treachery. It was as though General Pershing had used the honour in which his countrymen held him to persuade America to surrender to the Japanese.

Yet to understand something of the complicated intrigue, the plotting and counterplotting in North Africa, it is necessary to go further back in the search for treachery.

In the middle nineteen-thirties, a momentary sensation was caused in France by publicity given to a secret organization entitled the *Comités Secrets d'Action Révolutionnaire*, the secret committees for revolutionary action. More familiarly its members became known as the *Cagouards*, the *Hooded Men*.

This secret society had for its purpose the overthrow of the French Republic by violent means. A number of outrages were committed. The ordinary police investigations led to the discovery of the *Cagouard* groups' activities. They became more and more alarming. Munitions stores were discovered. What had already been done seemed only the beginning of a vast campaign of sabotage that would cripple France internally.

The trail led into the highest Rightist circles. Boasts were made that Pétain was with the *Cagouards*—Weygand's sympathy was assured. "Destroy the Republic, destroy Democracy," said the *Hooded Men*, "and the way will be cleared for the 'Real France,' a France where monarchy will rule and the two hundred families of French big business can sleep safely in the knowledge that their power will be unshaken for ever and ever."

Hitler's advisers in Berlin must have agreed with part of the theory. Whether they believed in sound slumber for the French upper crust can be questioned. It was soon evident that they piously agreed with the patriotic idea of destroying the Third Republic. It began to be whispered about that the Nazis were investing in the C.S.A.R. Control of such an organization might some day open the way, not for *La France Réelle*, but for Germany. Connections were also traced to Fascist Italy, to the Franco rebels in Spain.

The police made some arrests. Then suddenly the investigation of the *Cagouards* came up against a blank wall. The trail was leading too high. The control of the *Cagouards* seemed to emanate from high governmental and military quarters. Revelation would overthrow the Government, shake the Bourse, cause an increasingly incredulous public

to lose all faith in its natural leaders. The Cagouards were dynamite in more ways than one.

Many people knew that, so far, only a fringe of the veil covering the Cagouards had been lifted. Yet no one dared to strip the veil away and uncover the whole stinking mass beneath. The minor conspirators already arrested were not brought to public trial. Later they were quietly released.

Perhaps those at the top of the C.S.A.R. became alarmed. The society continued its existence on a more suave plane.

Cagouards or ex-Cagouards took an important role in the strange events in North Africa. One of the Cagouards' affiliated organizations seems to have had a finger in many pies, both in France and in Africa.

This was the Mouvement Synarchique d'Empire, the M.S.E.

It is ludicrous to deny that a certain amount of international feeling between those who follow the same trade or have the same interests does not already exist.

A journalist of one country finds it easy to strike a bond of understanding with a journalist of another. A general of one country who would be tongue-tied with a foreign business man can swap reminiscences with a foreign general. Whether they be bankers, mechanics, dock-labourers, or dukes, they can find common subjects for discussion, common problems, hopes, fears.

The bond between men of like callings but different countries is not ordinarily a strong one. It usually snaps in time of war. Yet if, to the ordinary feeling of sympathy is added the bond of great fear, the link may become stronger than nationalism or patriotism.

I have seen documents stating that the M.S.E. was only the French section of a kind of Bankers' and Big Business International. At any rate its members had important contacts with important financiers and leaders of industry both in Germany and in America. Whether those contacts had ever been incorporated into any actual international organization is more questionable.

The founder of the M.S.E. was Jean Coutrot, said to have been a Cagouard, who held various Government posts under the Republic and occupied a confidential position near Pétain in the Vichy régime.

Coutrot seems to have had a hand in the formation of several groups and societies in France, among them the study centre for "Human Problems" run by Dr Alexis Carrel, the friend of Lindbergh.

Members of the M.S.E. moved in the best French society. The bond that linked them with their opposite numbers in Germany and America was fear of Socialism and Communism. The direction of the movement lay in the hands of powerful French bankers and big business men. Membership was recruited from graduates of France's great schools, the École Polytechnique, the École Normale Supérieure, the École des Sciences Politiques, and the rest.

For general purpose, the M.S.E. had the destruction of constructive Socialism, and the overthrow of parliamentary government when political powers became too widespread to manipulate easily. The movement favoured an authoritarian régime as being more easily manœuvrable.

The purpose then was a bald and unashamed bid for power. "If our own members take over political power," said the M.S.E., "we will eliminate the political parasites whom we have to pay and manipulate to retain our economic control of France."

The M.S.E. wished to control prices and to surround the workers with enough social and legal controls to make any extremist action from that quarter impossible.

Cagoulards and M.S.E. worked hand in hand. Contact with representatives of German industry was easy and there was some loose talking about the eventuality of war. If France would put up only a token resistance, Germany would leave French towns, factories and works of art undestroyed. There would be a quick campaign in France, then the final smash against England before America had a chance to intervene.

There were wheels within wheels. Both French and Germans agreed that an attempt to make the European continent entirely self-sufficient might be ruinous. Better attempt to come to some sensible arrangement with American business. This, be it remembered, was in 1938.

Some of the names associated with the M.S.E. are interesting. Paul Baudoin of the Bank of Indo-China who worked with the Countess de Portes to prevent Premier

Reynaud from carrying on the fight in Brittany or North Africa; Pucheu, who as Vichy Minister of the Interior became one of France's most hated men; Peyrouton, also a Vichy Minister of the Interior; Jean Borotra, the tennis player; Deloncle, one of the moving spirits of both Cagoulards and M.S.E.; Flandin, once stated to be the M.S.E. contact with American business men; Benoit-Mechin, a former Cabinet member. There were many others in the Vichy Government.

Laval was not in the gang. And in the behind-the-scenes struggle for power at Vichy, the organization feared lest Laval intended to accent the Socialism in the National Socialist State he foresaw for France, at the expense of those who controlled the M.S.E. They had helped create a Fascist France because a Fascist France could be manoeuvred as they wanted. What they did not want was to have the even cleverer and more unscrupulous Laval create an entirely Hitlerite France, in which only he held the strings of power as Hitler's deputy. It was Peyrouton who ordered the arrest of Laval that marked his temporary eclipse.

Later Peyrouton and others were to appear in North Africa. Their methods of arrival and their subsequent careers were to be interesting.

The last few weeks before the Allied landing in North Africa were weeks of intense activity. American agents, well provided with funds, made carefully worded appeals to French patriotism or cupidity as each individual case might require. Robert Murphy, chief American diplomatic representative in the area, had the task of sounding out key men. The assortment of Frenchmen whom he chose as his closest contacts was a strange one, army officers, Cagoulards, big business men. The strangest thing is that none of them evidently tipped off the Germans. Or if they did, they were not believed. Yet Murphy rushed apparently unafraid into his task. Later it appeared that each hoped to get his own special reward from the invasion.

Other American agents contacted the most reliable patriotic groups, the de Gaullists, and warned them to be ready for the final signal. Patriotic young French Army officers worked out plans for the landing.

"Your grandmother very ill stop come at oncc," wired one of them to his wife in Southern France. Her grandmother had died years before. She had not seen her husband or known where he was for two months. But by dint of persuasion and personal charm, she wangled a passage on the next boat to North Africa.

"Suggest you need sea trip," cabled another. His wife too needed no second hint. She arrived in Algiers the day before the invasion.

High police officials in Algeria were ready to help.

Plans of patriots were preparing to put into action the plans they had made long ago. Guides were to be ready at landing points. Certain key points were to be seized and held for the arrival of the Allied troops. Somewhere the chain of information broke down and the invading troops bearing down on the coast had no information as to what kind of opposition they might expect to meet, or what patriots inside North Africa would be doing while the attack was in progress.

Much has been made of the excellence of the preparation. It has been used to justify the relations between the United States and the Vichy régime.

Yet the truth of the matter was that General Eisenhower, commander of the Allied expedition, when he set out for Africa had not been given the information that would enable him to know exactly where and to what extent he would meet French opposition. That lack of information was to have an important bearing on the whole campaign.

CHAPTER II

VOYAGE INTO WAR

I KNEW that I was going. But I did not know exactly where. All American correspondents in London accredited to the United States Army had been warned for weeks that they should collect all their military impedimenta—bed-roll, mess-tin, belt, water-bottle, tent and all the rest.

Then had come the discreet order. Report to such and such a building at precisely such and such a time. I was worried. If this was a really big operation, one man alone was going to have a difficult time covering it for N.B.C. So Stanley Richardson, N.B.C.'s new London director, and I had tried to 'phone three or four press correspondents who might be in on such an operation. We hoped we might get them to do some broadcasts or help me in the coverage in case several landings were to be made on an enemy coast. Every 'phone call was a failure. In each office the answer was that the correspondent was out and no one knew when he might be back.

N.B.C. had won the one position open to American broadcasters in the first landing parties. Now the disappearance of several of my colleagues made me think that the plan had been changed, that somehow or other N.B.C. had been manoeuvred out of its place. That was exactly what had happened, but I could not be sure of it at the time.

Correspondents in London were a secretive crowd during those days. We did not mention what most of us were thinking about even to our best friends.

One agency correspondent told Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph B. Phillips, head of the Army Public Relations unit, that he had come away from home while his wife was out shopping and that he had never mentioned to her the possibility that he might be away from home for some time. Phillips decided that a distracted wife telephoning to the

police and the hospitals for her missing correspondent husband would endanger security more than at least a minimum explanation. So the reporter rang up home and told his spouse he had been called away on a business trip that might take two or three weeks.

I had prepared my own wife for an absence of perhaps two months. It was seven months before I saw my wife and baby again.

I reported at the Public Relations office. Filling out an entry form at the desk beside me was Thomas Watson of International News Service. We pretended not to notice each other and it was only when we entered the same door at the same moment that we both said: "So you're going too."

We learned that we were to report with all our gear, ready to leave, two days later. A public relations officer would be with us, Captain Anthony Leviero, formerly of the *New York Times*, with whom I had once covered a trial of those two unsavoury racketeers, Gurrah and Lepke, years ago in Manhattan.

That night in the Press Club just off Fleet Street I was playing billiards with Jerome Willis, former Paris correspondent of the London *Evening Standard*.

He said: "Confidentially, Mac, I think something is up, perhaps a big commando raid on France."

"That's interesting," I said. "What makes you think so?"

"Alan Humphreys, the Reuters man who went with you to Dieppe, hasn't appeared in Fleet Street for more than a week. He represents all the English agencies on commando raids. Some French-speaking officers I know of have also disappeared. There have been a lot of troop movements of one kind and another."

"Might be camouflage or something, Paddy," I suggested. "Anyway, if it is a raid I suppose we'll read about it in the papers some morning."

When Willis 'phoned my apartment two or three days later to suggest another game of billiards, my wife said: "He's gone off on one of those military manoeuvres he goes to. Somewhere in the south of England, I think. I'll have him call you when he gets back."

At the appointed time we reported, six in all, Leviero,

Watson, Charles Collingwood of C.B.S., Howard Winner, news-reel cameraman, and Donovan, B.B.C. engineer, who was to run a recording machine or a radio station as circumstances might require.

Watson dumped his luggage in the corner and said, "Now, Joe. I'll just step around to the Savage Club and pick up the three bottles of whisky that are waiting for me. I won't be gone twenty minutes."

"Sorry, Tom," said Phillips. "You're in the army now. You can't leave here except to go to the train. Supposing someone in the Savage Club should see you in uniform calling for three bottles of whisky. They'd be bound to think something strange was happening."

When I saw my friendly and respected opposition, Collingwood, I realized that my suspicion was a true one. N.B.C. had somehow or other been manœuvred out of its exclusive broadcasting place in the first landing. If I was to go first, I would have broadcasting company, but I had a hunch that Collingwood's presence meant that no broadcaster was in the first wave.

As the blacked-out train, filled with British and American troops, slid out through London's drizzly mist, I felt a certain amount of confidence. There was the same tense, excited feeling that I had experienced before—the excitement of knowing you were leaving behind all familiar things, all ordinary values, to go into a dangerous unknown where you would have to rely on luck and the intelligence of the men who planned the operation to see you through.

I knew that I had had more training for this kind of work than most of my colleagues. I had been the only American broadcaster on the big Canadian raid against Dieppe. I had been lucky. More than two-thirds of the men who went on that raid had been killed, wounded or taken prisoner. Twice I had gone through the preliminaries of raids that had been called off at the last moment. Since I had become a war correspondent in England after my escape from France in June, 1940, I had faithfully followed the British Army in training, spent days and weeks on army manœuvres, visited every type of unit in the British Army. I had watched the British Army turn from a defensive into an offensive army. Then I had spent the winter of 1940-1

taking a course of War Office lectures on the organization and work of the Army.

There had been little in all this that I could use as material for my broadcasts. Most correspondents dropped the idea of lectures and manœuvres when they found that neither was worth a story. Some others, like myself, had kept at it. But most of them had now scattered all over the world, to India, Egypt, and theatres of war that offered more chance of action than England. Like Bob Cooper of the *London Times*, who I believe knew more about the British Army than practically any army officer in England, they had become tired of waiting. Now Cooper, the man best qualified to cover this operation from the British point of view, was somewhere near the Burma frontier.

I had always hoped that the background work over the past two and a half years might be useful. I first found out that it might the previous summer when talking things over with an experienced American correspondent. It was during one of the raids that did not take place. Two years before, he had known more than I about the British Army. Now I found that things I knew as a matter of course were all new information to him.

It gave me confidence that the days of effort, without ever a broadcast to show for them, had not been wasted. When the test came, I would know what to look for and where to look for it. I would not be covering events in a vacuum, but I would be able to assess them at their proper value and relate them to past experience.

True, I had seen the American Army on only two or three occasions since I stood on the Belfast dock and watched the first boatload of American troops tie up in January, 1942. But one army is much like another and I would be able to judge the Americans from what I knew of the British. So I comforted myself that nobody was better qualified to cover what looked like the biggest story of my career.

I did not realize how big a story it was until we reached our embarkation port. Out in the stream were a dozen or more big troopships, all apparently packed with soldiers.

"Bejazzuz," exclaimed Watson, mocking his own Irish accent, "'tis some party we're goin' on."

This was no raid. At a rough calculation, forty thousand men must be in those ships, and more were coming from our own train. This was the real thing, INVASION.

A sailor said: "If you think this is big, you should have seen the convoy that went out two days ago. Twice as big as this."

Sunshine glinted on the wave-tips and the wind spun them into a bright pattern, as our boatload of troops drew up alongside a great liner.

"Thank God, it's British," Watson said. "That means two dollars a bottle for whisky, gin twopence a drink. Don't give me any of your American troopships, with never a glass of beer or a spot of whisky the whole trip, though it be cold as the ice in Iceland or hotter than the hinges of hell. I'm dry as a bone after those hours of waiting and that train-ride, but one moderately large drink will clear the fog from my throat, settle my stomach, and make me a happy and contented correspondent again."

On board, the six of us were settled two in a cabin. Correspondents accredited to the British Army have the honorary rank and the privileges of a captain. The American Army, for some obscure reason which nobody has been able to ascertain, rates them as second-lieutenants. At the beginning of the war there was some talk about ranking correspondents as honorary majors. As a matter of fact officers of both armies are usually somewhat puzzled as to where in the military hierarchy comes the niche of correspondents, who talk to both generals and privates as equal to equal. The result is that travelling facilities for the correspondents are usually good.

In the lounge—once frequented by maharajahs and British administrative officers—weary reporters called for a drink.

"Verry sorry, sir," the steward replied, "we have only orange, lemon or grapefruit squash, ginger-ale, tonic and ginger-beer. We have just received an order that no beer or spirits are to be served this voyage."

Watson exploded with Irish wrath. "Do you mean that while this trip lasts we can't have a single drink?"

"Sorry, sir," said the steward. "Those are my orders. I may say, sir, that this is the first trip this ship has ever made in which no drinks have been served. I understand that the

order comes from high American quarters to bring the British vessels into conformity with the American ships in the convoy."

All around the lounge, British officers were making the same discovery. Later, the chief steward was to take me to see the room full of rare wines, liqueurs, spirits of every description, and the other room filled to the brim with barrel after barrel and case after case of beer. But none could be issued. For a few angry minutes General Eisenhower, on whom we first pinned the blame, must have had tingling ears. In later evenings, as we sipped our synthetic orangeade, the best that was ever said about the idea of banning all beer and spirits was the dubious reflection that it was probably very healthy for us. But then, we would have indulged in the same reflection if we had been told that all cigarettes and tobacco were barred during the trip. Rationing all could have understood, even if the ration had been only a daily bottle of beer and an after-dinner whisky-and-soda. But the complete banning of all drinks won unanimous disapproval throughout the ship.

The infliction of such a strange and terrible American custom as complete prohibition on a shipload of men and officers, mostly British, did not help international understanding between allies. Even after the landing in North Africa, the custom of not issuing beer or liquor to the American Army put Americans in an unfortunate position.

I suppose the reason for the ban on all liquor in the Army is that women's organizations at home like the W.C.T.U. and the D.A.R. would be shocked at the knowledge that army officers and men drink. Why, when a man is put into uniform, his right to take a drink should become the concern of pressure groups of elderly women, is incredible when seen from the perspective of North Africa.

At first American officers in North Africa were allowed to buy a certain liquor ration at the British NAAFI—the equivalent of the Post Exchange. The ration was something like two bottles a month—not enough for much insobriety, but sufficient—if carefully guarded—to treat a brother officer or an ally to a highball.

Then someone must have complained. The privilege was withdrawn from the American Army. So American officers

had to invest in heavy Algerian wine or pay exorbitant prices for bad African brandy in order to appear hospitable towards their allies.

The American Army, like any other large group of American men, will take a drink now and then in any case. Because they were not allowed good American or English beer, American soldiers drank the powerful African wine which must be treated with the same care you would exercise in shoeing a mule blindfold. Men and officers alike would swap a month's rations, a jeep, or the shirt off their back for a drink of Scotch whisky. To men who had been fighting for days in mud and cold, it tasted like golden sunshine from heaven. But because of some twisted, old-maidish, interfering morality legislation in Washington, several hundred thousand American men in North Africa were forced to appear in the eyes of their allies as spongers or poor relations. After several hundred years of campaigning, the British have learned that a man fights better if he can have a glass of beer or a small drink of spirits when the battle is over and he is tired and nervy.

Since Neal Dow introduced total prohibition into my own State of Maine some seventy-five years ago, it has been a symbol of Puritan hypocrisy rather than a pointer to a healthier society. Nowhere was that hypocrisy more apparent than in North Africa.

Our liner-troopship left its moorings so quietly that at first I did not believe it when one of the others told me we had started. I went up on deck. It was dark and you could see little—a few dim lights on shore, not far away the hooded red and green running lights of another member of our convoy. They too were beginning to move. Looking down over the side I could see the phosphorescent glow in the water as the ripples broke away from the ship and we got under way.

Dimly outlined against the black sky loomed the last point of land at the harbour mouth. As we slid by it, a group of British and American soldiers far down the deck began to sing. Their voices, the tinny noise of the piano, had a strangely peaceful effect in the still night air.

I put in my notebook the songs they sang as they moved into the unknown, the songs men sang as they went to war

in the month of November, 1942. They were "Bluebirds Over the White Cliffs of Dover," "Annie Laurie," "Rose of Tralee," "You Take the High Road and I'll Take the Low Road, and I'll be in Scotland afore Ye," "The Last Round-up," "Margie," "Tipperary," "I belong to Glasgow" and "Roll Out the Barrel."

Listening to the music drift across the dark water and feeling the throb of the great engines beneath the deck, I thought of my wife and son—probably asleep in our apartment in London. I wondered whether Lucy was perhaps not lying sleepless in bed thinking of the future. I felt very lonely and wondered when I would see them again. The last point of land was sliding by, not more than a hundred yards away, the last land I should see for days. War reporting has become my business, but I damned all wars that brought death and suffering and separation of families. The war was taking me from the beings I loved best. For years the war had kept me from seeing my mother and father back in Maine. I felt so bad that I left the darkness of the deck for the light and human companionship of the lounge.

I never gamble because I gamble so badly that I have found I always lose. That night I broke my custom. I played seven-card stud poker for three hours. I lost ten dollars, but it was worth it.

Not many people on the ship knew where we were going; the captain, the officer-in-charge of troops, Leviero and, as it later appeared, Collingwood.

We nailed Leviero and demanded that, now we had started, he should tell us where we were headed.

"I have orders not to tell you until the fourth day at sea," he parried. "We might be torpedoed or have engine trouble and be forced to turn back. In that case the fewer people who know, the better."

He suggested we all hand in our guesses about our destination in writing. The fourth day out, we would find how near we had come to it.

We had all been mulling over our voyage for days. Norway had been whispered about to some extent. But I thought I had reduced the problem to a conclusion by sheer logic. What could an invasion of Norway in Novem-

ber hope to achieve—a landing perhaps, but no serious campaign could be fought during the winter in that part of the world. The mountain would have laboured and brought forth a mouse. With so many Americans running and manning the show, the campaign must be spectacular if it were to justify the hopes of the world. And no Norwegian campaign in midwinter could be more than a dreary, unspectacular, static battle against both the weather and the Germans.

France? No, I had been to Dieppe and these great troopships could not be risked so near German air bases. An invasion of France would begin in a different manner. Southern France perhaps? No. The Germans had too strong forces ready to thrust into unoccupied territory at the first threat. Vichy forces in North Africa could cut our long, slender supply line through the Straits of Gibraltar into Southern France.

I remembered the first time I had met General de Gaulle in December, 1940. I had been the first American correspondent to interview him. In a talk that lasted an hour and a half, he had expounded his ideas on the course the war would take. He had predicted that Germany would not try to invade England, but instead would thrust into the Balkans. He foresaw a quick German victory there, followed by a clash with Russia that would drain German manpower and material and 'cause the Germans in the long run to lose the war.

"You Americans will come into the war before it is over," de Gaulle told me. "If you and the British strike now at French North Africa, you will establish your bases for the eventual attack on Europe. Germany can protect the coasts that are nearest Britain. From the base of Britain, our invasion efforts against Europe are limited by geography."

"But Germany cannot protect all the European coastline from Bulgaria to northern Norway," de Gaulle went on in that interview two years before the event. "Land in North Africa. You will find little resistance there. Then you will be in a position to stab at the German anywhere. You can pick and choose your points at which you will invade the Continent, and Germany will be helpless to protect them all."

Two years later I remembered that interview and the beautiful logic of it struck me forcibly. Of course that was where we were going, North Africa.

I wrote down, "Morocco—Casablanca—with the faint possibility we may be going as far east as Oran." I did not dream that the huge convoys would go sailing up the coast of North Africa as far as Algiers. To my amateur strategy that seemed far too risky.

Watson wrote "Norway." Donovan put down "Brest; coast of France." Winner, through some obscure process of reasoning had a strange choice. If I remember correctly, he wrote "Portugal."

Only Collingwood was prepared for the trip. Someone had tipped him off and he came with a bagful of tropical uniforms, medicines carefully selected to cure the various ills we would find in North Africa, as well as the great satisfaction of knowing where he was heading. He smilingly wrote, "Casablanca, Oran and Algiers."

For the officers and men in our convoy, sailing to war was a pleasant experience. About fifty thousand troops as near as we could figure were bowling along down the Atlantic in calm weather on as peaceful an autumn cruise as you could expect in peacetime. True, the men were crowded in hammocks and bunks below. But their food was good. The liner was large enough for them to get sufficient exercise and because of the calm weather, sea-sickness never appeared as a problem. Officers and correspondents lived in comfortable cabins, ate dinners on white linen tablecloths, strolled in the sun on deck, and in the evenings had a pleasant game of cards or a good book to read before a night of peaceful slumber. Everyone was in uniform. The ship's swimming-pool wasn't in use and there were no women to flirt with on the boat deck. Barring these minor inconveniences, the trip reminded one of a pleasure cruise.

Nearby sped corvettes and destroyers of the British Navy always on guard. We knew by now that other convoys were ahead of us and we were due to land at Algiers four days after the initial landing.

"Fighting will still be going on," Leviero assured us, when we began to tear our hair, curse and weep at the news that other reporters were ahead of us with the troops who

would make the first landings. "You will get plenty of fighting," he added. That was small comfort. The story would be cold. There would be nothing to write about. We might as well have never come at all as come four days late. A few hours would be understandable, but what anti-broadcasting machinations had been going on behind the scene to make the Allied landings the exclusive property of the news agencies and individual newspapers for four days? Did the Generals at the top yet realize that the telephone was here to stay? Did they know the power of radio?

As we verbally belted him and flayed him, poor Leviero could only assure us what we already knew—that he personally had nothing to do with the arrangements that had placed us in the second convoy.

Months later in Tunisia, I came across an old copy of *Editor and Publisher*, the organ of the newspaper publishers.

An editorial entitled "Radio One Week Late" gloated over the fact that broadcasters only made their first broadcasts from North Africa days after agency and newspaper correspondents had started sending dispatches. The editorial took the view that, for this reason, radio might have its place in the transmission of news, but radio's place was not covering a war. I wrote the editor that his editorial showed he was not aware that broadcasters only arrived on the scene five days after other correspondents, through no fault of our own. After Collingwood and I did arrive, there was never again a question about the part radio played in covering the North African campaign.

Howard Winner, the cameraman, summed up the trip at its best and worst. He had been clambering about the ship getting pictures of troops doing physical exercises, the majestic sight of the ships ploughing in unison their long white furrows through the Atlantic, and the gunners and lookouts scanning the sky for enemy planes.

Winner came up to us lying stretched out in the sun and said disgustedly: "All this talk about action, and my pictures look like a travelogue."

Watson was quite satisfied "My agency," he explained, "has three more men beside myself wandering about the ocean in convoys. Let the eager young bucks risk their necks and be heroes among the bullets while the troops land

on enemy beaches. Then old Tommy will come along when things are nice and quiet and do a sweet clean-up story that will bring joy to the hearts of my New York office."

Watson's courage was beyond question. He had been a captain in the Rifle Brigade in France in the first world war and still walked with the short quick step of the British Rifle Regiments. If ordered to go with the Commandos or Rangers or Parachutists, he would have taken an extra drink and cheerfully done his job. But he was a man of long agency experience and he knew that the race is not always to the swift and the "sweet clean-up story" is often the best.

During the trip I struck up a fast friendship with the radio operators of the ship, Radio Officer Horn and Radio Officer Edmond. They were keen radio newsmen and in peacetime they published the ship's daily paper by which passengers followed the course of world events on the long voyage to India or Australia. They gave me the privilege of coming up to their radio room to follow the news being sent out all over the world. They and the other ships' officers showed me every hospitality and I found them one of the friendliest groups of men I had ever met.

We were somewhere in the Atlantic when the first flash of the Allied landings came over the air. From then on, we reporters hung around the radio room during the daytime news bulletins and far into each night. We kept listening for the colourful landing stories we were expecting from our confrères who had gone ahead, but we never heard them on the air.

Headquarters seemed to be the source of most of the news and headquarters was in Gibraltar. We slid through the Straits of Gibraltar by night. On the right we could see the lights of some Moroccan town, on the left the lights of Spanish Algericas. For many of us, they were the first lights we had seen in any towns since war began in September, 1939. Three years without lights. Now we saw them as we were heading into a battle for Africa. Somewhere in that darkness on the left was headquarters—General Eisenhower and the staff who had planned this campaign and now must fight it through to the end.

A cold night wind whipped through the Straits, but a few men hung over the rails looking on the lights of Spanish

territory. Yet I do not think any of us envied the Spaniards their lights. We who had lived and worked through the London blitzes and seen the courage of that great city where my sons were born, we preferred the purpose and self-knowledge of England in the black-out to the uneasy conscience of Fascist Spain with all its lights that glittered so across the water of the Straits. The glitter was the ten-cent store trumpery of the Bowery harlot. The honest woman in wartime needed no such jewels to be attractive to men of goodwill.

That night we had been talking about our convoy vessels, the little destroyers and corvettes that hovered always on the edge of the horizon, our steadfast companions through the days and nights of that voyage into war.

An American officer guessed we would have more protection in the dangerous waters of the Mediterranean.

I said: "Of course we'll pick up some really powerful escort vessels at Gib. The German radio the other night said a convoy sailed from Gib. with three or four battleships, several aircraft carriers, some cruisers and thirty or forty destroyers. They'll guard us with the whole Mediterranean and Atlantic fleets."

Everyone seemed satisfied with my explanation. Next morning I hurried up on deck to get the thrill of seeing our convoy ringed with fighting naval steel. Out on the horizon chugged the same little destroyers and corvettes that had been with us all the way. No battleships, no aircraft carriers, no cruisers. We had picked up only one more destroyer during the night.

I was disgusted. Perhaps the battleships and carriers were just over the horizon where we could not see them. Perhaps they were fighting a naval battle five hundred miles away. We did not know. Anyway, the faithful little escorts took us all the way to our port in safety. Once we saw a depth charge explode.

But that was the only sign of war until we woke one morning and saw the sunlight streaming down on the white and tan buildings of Algiers that reminded you of a mass of dazzling white lilies crushed by an artistic hand against the bowl of the hills that sloped down to the blue Mediterranean.

CHAPTER III

AMERICANS AREN'T ENEMIES

WHEN American and British troops landed in the darkness of North Africa in the early morning of November 8th, 1942, the military preparations had been skilfully made. The Germans were caught asleep. The blow was unexpected.

Periodic scares had been stirred up around Dakar in Vichy's West African territory. Allied planes had flown over the port presumably to take pictures for invasion maps. Allied warships had been seen on courses that would take them to Dakar. In Vichy and Berlin, Dakar was the subject of much discussion. The U-boat packs raced down to strategic positions off West Africa, many days' voyages from the Mediterranean. As Americans landed in Morocco, women and children evacuated from Dakar in preparation for the coming struggle were being landed at Casablanca.

The camouflage had been effective. It was all the more effective because when French Morocco was taken, Dakar was cut off from all supplies. Once North Africa was taken, the fall of Dakar became automatic.

As we ploughed down the Atlantic and the first great convoys headed up the Mediterranean, other units of British troops were moving to points in England from which they could be quickly put on shipboard. They would only be used in one of two contingencies.

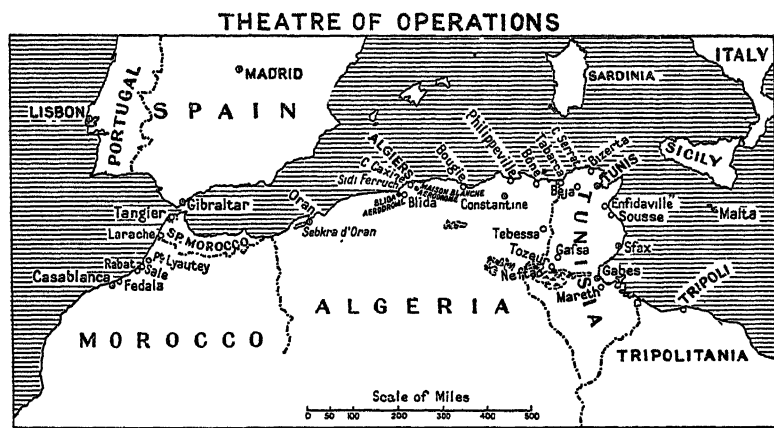
If the landings were made without a fight and the French welcomed us, we would occupy Tunis and Bizerta at once. The troops moving into their concentration points in England would immediately leave the country. They would carry out an attack directly from England against Sicily and Sardinia, and seize the islands before the Axis knew what was happening.

The second contingency that would cause these troops to be used would be stiff resistance from the French. If the landings were contested and the occupation of Morocco and

Algeria looked impossible without more reinforcements, the units in England would be thrown at once into the African battle zone.

As it turned out, these troops in England were not used until months later. There was moderate resistance, not so slight as to make an immediate attack on Sicily and Sardinia feasible, not so difficult that with a few days' fighting the forces who had already landed could not master the situation.

To enter the Mediterranean as far east as Algiers, with the whole southern coast of Europe lined with German air-



fields and U-boat bases and with the Italian Fleet within easy striking distance, seemed a risky gamble to outside observers like myself. But on the part of the men who planned the blow, it was a well-calculated gamble. They figured it had a better than fifty-fifty chance of success. Events proved them right. They had even planned to thrust those first convoys through the narrow Sicilian Channel and land at Tunis and Bizerta in Tunisia. But the odds seemed against this daring scheme and it was shelved at the last moment. As it turned out the scheme could probably have been accomplished successfully, but the unknown factors in the problem were too numerous for the planners in London. They could not figure ahead of time that everything would break the way they hoped. If the Italian Fleet or the Vichy Fleet in Toulon had fought, or if

the Germans had got wind of the Allied intentions while the convoys were on the way, disaster might have resulted. But everything happened as the men who drafted the plans wished.

The military planning of the North African invasion was brilliant. General Eisenhower and the men who worked with him through the late summer and early autumn of 1942 justified all the high hopes that had been placed in them. Not since Belisarius sailed from Asia Minor in the sixth century to wrest Carthage and North Africa from the Vandals, had so many shiploads of men set out to begin a campaign so far from their bases. The responsibility of fighting a campaign at the end of thousands of ocean miles of communication in an area threatened possibly by two strong enemy fleets and certainly menaced by thousands of warplanes based a few hundred miles away, was one to make any commander's hair turn grey. Add to this the hundreds of miles that separated western Morocco from Algiers, the hundreds more of miles from Algiers to Tunis over narrow mountain roads, and you begin to realize the extent of Eisenhower's task. Tack on to these difficulties the fact that this was the first large naval invasion in history conducted from the beginning as an Allied venture by Allies and success might depend on eliminating the thousand and one opportunities for friction between the Allies. The young and vigorous Commander-in-Chief, Eisenhower, had his work cut out for him. Many of his subordinates had far more experience in actual campaigning behind them. At the beginning some British officers resented being placed under the command of a comparatively untried American general, where they would not have resented serving under, say, a MacArthur.

But those of us who saw Eisenhower regularly know that even in the darkest days, when the success or failure of the whole campaign hung in an uneasy balance, he never lost his cheerful courage, never lost his grip on the rapidly developing situation. And what is more, he won the profound respect and the eager co-operation of all his subordinate commanders and staff officers, both British and American. Tough, straight-thinking and straight-talking, he was almost a fanatic on Allied co-operation.

Time after time I have heard him say: "This is an Allied battle. I will clamp down on anyone who tries to start any trouble between the Americans and the British under my command. There will be no praise or blame for the British as British or the Americans as Americans. We are in this together as Allies. We will fight it shoulder to shoulder. Men will be praised or blamed for what they do, not for their nationality."

During the whole six months of the campaign, I never heard anything but expressions of the highest praise and the greatest respect for Eisenhower's ability. Events proved that the men who chose him as commander-in-chief made a good choice.

It was in the politico-military planning of the campaign that serious flaws appeared. The Germans had long demonstrated the importance of politico-military planning, the co-ordination of political and military effort in the conquest of new countries. The Fifth Column, the use of bribe and blandishment, the employment of propaganda in conjunction with bayonets, trade agreement and tank, these had been shown to the world in France, Norway, the Balkans.

For two and a half years the State Department in Washington had kept up diplomatic relations with Vichy in spite of the fact that the American press and public rightly regarded Vichy as a Fascist enemy. The excuse given was that only thus could the State Department keep representatives inside France and North Africa to prepare the ground for eventual military action. Facts never justified this excuse.

Instead American diplomats came out of Vichy praising Marshal Pétain, the enemy of democracy, the man whose quivering voice had persuaded France to surrender. Someone was bamboozled, but it was not the slick Fascist gang in Vichy.

Since the State Department had separated itself from the opinion of the mass of the American people in dealing with Vichy and deprived its actions of any moral basis, it was to be expected that justification would be found on a real-politic basis. That is, in the long run, the State Department would be able to yank aside the veil that covered its work

and say "It may not have been the moral thing to do, but our results prove that it is sometimes necessary in dealing with rascals to be even trickier and less moral than they. Behold, we have achieved a startling success by these methods."

Even this questionable plea was never proved by facts. With more than two full years in which to make the politico-military preparation, the least Americans could expect was that by dint of propaganda, bribery, threat and the fact that most Frenchmen wanted to fight Germans not Americans, American State Department representatives would have succeeded in arranging a peaceful, unopposed landing in North Africa, and immediate co-operation of the French Fleet and such elements of the French Army as were in North Africa.

With none of the natural sympathy and friendship that link the French and American peoples, Germany had negotiated such an entry into Bulgaria and Rumania.

Instead, the American representatives confined themselves to a few humane gestures such as sending food and medicines to France and North Africa in the hope that the French would one day be grateful. In North Africa itself there were some last-minute attempts to win French commanders over to our side before the landings were made. Except in a few instances these attempts failed. When the State Department at the last minute yanked aside the veil and said: "Behold our work," there was nothing to see.

If the United States had broken diplomatic relations with Vichy in June, 1940, and Allied troops had landed in North Africa in November, 1942, the results would probably have been about the same. There would have been some fighting. But as soon as French commanders and troops found that America seriously intended to occupy North Africa for the purpose of fighting Germany, most would have decided that their real enemies were the Germans, not the Americans and the British. They would have done precisely what they did, cease fighting the Allies and start fighting the Germans.

During the course of two and a half years, the State Department had frequently spoken of the necessity of continuing relations with Vichy so that the French Fleet

should not fall into German hands or turn against the British and Americans. Yet no observer who had tried to keep in touch with French opinion or understand French psychology ever believed for a moment that the French Navy would willingly turn over its ships to Germany or use them to fight British and Americans. A forcible attempt by either side to get possession of the ships or a German attempt to send them into battle against the British Fleet would have meant instant scuttling, according to all reports. A partial justification for the American State Department's policy would have been found if the Toulon fleet had sailed at once to join the British and American ships in North African harbours. Instead, the French Fleet scuttled itself in Toulon Harbour.

The beliefs about the French Fleet expressed by American officials made it seem apparent that in the unreal circles of Vichy in which American diplomats moved, someone had skilfully used for his own purpose the bugbear of the French Fleet's teaming up with Hitler. So Vichy got American diplomatic support and American food. The United States got nothing.

Subsequent events were to confirm the error of United States foreign policy towards France since June, 1940, and to show that during those years the instinct of the American people had been as right as the manoeuvrings of their professional diplomats had been wrong.

The great convoys to North Africa were, of course, spotted the moment they reached Gibraltar. German observers were then, as now, posted on rooftops at La Linea and Algeciras in Spanish territory surrounding Gibraltar Bay. With their powerful fieldglasses, the German military and naval experts could identify the warships and merchantmen that swept through the narrows or anchored in the harbour.

Yet the Germans missed the significance of the move. They believed the Allies were making a new attempt to run reinforcements and supplies to Malta. Hasty orders were given to shift all available forces of the Luftwaffe to airfields in Sardinia, Sicily and southern Italy. The convoys were to be ambushed and blasted to pieces from the moment they entered the narrow waters of the Sicilian Channel.

In daylight, the convoys passed Oran and Algiers and headed on in the general direction of Malta. Then came night. The convoys sharply turned about and drove back at full speed for Algiers and Oran. The Luftwaffe was caught helpless. For several vital days, they could do nothing to hinder the invasion of North Africa until they had shifted their planes and material back to other airfields.

The U-boat packs were far away. It took the German Navy nearly ten days to recall them and put them in a position to create any serious bother for the British and American Navies.

The actual landing operations were well conceived, but not very well executed. Both British and American troops were inexperienced, although willing and full of fight. If the landings had been made on a coast-line held by experienced and determined German forces, Allied errors might have been costly. As it was, casualties were not heavy for such an operation and officers and men learned a great number of things that would be valuable in any future action of this type.

Late on the night of November 7th, Mr Robert Murphy, the chief American diplomatic representative, called on General Juin, commander of the French army in North Africa.

"General," he said, "American forces are landing to-night in North Africa. They come not as enemies but as friends of France. They do not want to fight against French troops or conquer French territory. They wish to use North Africa as a base from which to attack Europe and liberate France. We hope for your co-operation, General, and the co-operation of the French forces here, against the common enemy. German troops occupy the greater part of France. Only through our victory can France be free."

Juin thought in silence a moment or two. He was one of the high French officers who had been taken prisoner by the Germans. The Germans had offered him his freedom in return for his pledge that he would not again take up arms against Germany. He, like several other French generals and higher officers, had accepted the offer. Vichy had sent him to North Africa to organize the territory against possible attack by the Allies.

"Were I the responsible commander here, I would accept your offer," he told Murphy. "But Admiral Darlan is my superior, the representative of Marshal Pétain. As you know, he is in North Africa and the decision must be his. May I ask his advice?"

Murphy agreed and while the American representative listened, Juin telephoned Darlan's residence. The 'phone call woke the Admiral out of a sound sleep. Juin asked him to come at once to a conference of the utmost importance with Murphy and himself.

Why Darlan was in North Africa at this particular time is still a subject for discussion. He had come to see his son, stricken in North Africa with infantile paralysis. Darlan had visited the chief officials in the area and stressed the necessity of obedience to Pétain in the trying days that lay ahead. I have asked a good many people whether Darlan timed his visit to coincide with the Allied invasion. Americans who were with him at the time believe he was genuinely surprised to learn what was happening. French officials who were in a position to know also agree that he was surprised and they insist Darlan happened to be in North Africa by mere chance. They say he had intended to leave for Vichy several days previously, but the poor condition of his son and the insistence of Madame Darlan had delayed his return.

I met Darlan several times. His political career showed him to be one of the cleverest political tight-rope walkers of modern times. In the Vichy circus he had juggled political power with such skilled jugglers as Laval and Abetz and managed to keep as many balls in the air as any of them. I find it hard to believe that a figure as smart as Darlan just happened to arrive in North Africa in the fall of 1942 by mere chance. A good many people in Vichy France knew the Americans and British were planning something against North Africa. Although it is pure guesswork on my part, I believe Darlan may have caught a hint of this and taken a run down to North Africa to check up on the Vichy officials and look over the general defensive situation at the same time as he visited his son. Playing his cards close to his chest as usual, he may not have revealed his knowledge to the officials who surrounded him. The

actual landing date may have come as a surprise to Darlan, and he may indeed have intended to return to Vichy in a few days previously when he had found all quiet in North Africa.

Far away in London at about this time of night, Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden was telling an astonished General de Gaulle that American and British troops were about to land in North Africa. The Americans had insisted that de Gaulle should be kept in ignorance of the move and the Foreign Office had agreed. The State Department had its own policy for French North Africa and the Foreign Office stayed in the wings while the State Department prepared to accept alone the audience's cheers or boos as the case might be. So far the efforts of the performer had won only whistles and occasional pennies on the stage from an American public which disliked Fascists whether they were to be found in Berlin, Rome, Madrid or Vichy. Now the whole world had become the audience. All over occupied Europe, peoples of the oppressed nations were waiting for America to give them a lead. But the State Department skidded ungracefully into the scene by failing to inform the man on whom millions of French men and women pinned their hopes for freedom, Charles de Gaulle.

The usual excuse given harks back to the unsuccessful expedition to Dakar. British and American officials say: "De Gaulle was associated with the Dakar expedition and you see what happened. Vichy found out. Frenchmen can't keep secrets."

I was in London at the time. The people who talk like that may not remember that Vichy officials not yet repatriated were free to move about London as they wished or communicate with their own country. Even some of the Frenchmen who did not agree entirely with Vichy disliked de Gaulle intensely. They had the entrée to important British quarters and a hint or two dropped in the right place might smear de Gaulle. Frenchmen who preferred Vichy—I remember striking up an acquaintance with one young French sailor who afterwards confessed to me and to a Scotland Yard inspector that he was an official of the Cagoulards—were being repatriated to France and they carried back information.

When Darlan arrived for the conference with Murphy and Juin, his small eyes were still foggy with sleep. But with Murphy's first words, they snapped into crystal-clear focus. Darlan understood the situation when Murphy had completed his first sentence.

If, at this distance, we can interpret Darlan's reasoning on the basis of his known character, Darlan's first instinct must have been to play for time until he knew how strong were the forces the Americans and British had sent. With Juin watching, he could not, however, afford to show any deviation from the Vichy line.

The Admiral told Murphy that he must do his duty and order immediate resistance at all points. At the same time, we can believe that his first thought was to investigate the landings. If American and British strength appeared overwhelming, well, officials of the Vichy embassy in Washington had been reporting the growing power of America, the flow of planes and tanks. Perhaps Germany was not going to win the war after all. In that case, Darlan must get on the right side. Murphy had told Darlan that neither de Gaulle nor any Fighting French troops were with the landing parties. Was that not a clear indication that if he were skilful enough, Darlan might be permitted to forget the past and do the amazing reversal of policy that would permit him to co-operate with the Americans?

Now he must resist, so that if the landings were only token landings and the Germans succeeded in arriving with sufficient forces to crush them, Darlan would still be on the right side, the right side for Darlan, the winning side.

It was at this stage that a certain amount of near-tragical comedy occurred. Inside Algiers bands of de Gaullists were doing the work for which they were prepared. One group seized the big central post office. They paralysed all telephone and telegraph communications for several hours. Another group, among them members of the semi-military youth movement, the Chantiers de Jeunesse, attacked and held the great white Central Government building up on the hill overlooking the war memorial. A number of the high police officials were patriotically working for the liberation of France. They saw to it that no immediate mobilization of the police force could be ordered.

Algiers lay open for Allied troops to walk in. But the attacking force had no information of this. They were making landings some fifteen miles up and down the coast from Algiers. It would take them hours to reach the city. Instead of sending in a few boatloads to the beaches on both sides of Algiers Harbour, commanders of the task force were preparing to throw boats and troops into the one point where resistance might be expected—the very centre of Algiers Harbour itself.

A group of de Gaullists had followed Murphy to the conference. When Darlan attempted to leave the conference to order resistance, he was stopped. The break in telephone communications had paralysed not only the ability of the Vichyites to arrange the defence of the city, but also the ability of the various patriot groups to contact each other or Murphy.

One enthusiastic French leader of the patriots suggested that shooting Darlan out of hand would greatly assist the landing parties. He argued that if Darlan were shot, no Vichyite would dare give orders to resist and the landing parties could take over Algiers without a fight. This simple solution of an involved diplomatic situation horrified Murphy and he sternly ordered that not a hair of Darlan's balding head be touched.

For the moment Darlan was Murphy's prisoner. Within the next twenty-four hours Murphy was to be Darlan's prisoner and also his captor again.

For three or four days Murphy and Darlan, and later General Mark Clark, were to be in close consultation. Arguments, threats, promises and counter-arguments continued by day and night.

Meanwhile, off Algiers Harbour two British destroyers crept towards the booms that protected the port. They were picked up by the radio detection apparatus of the French Admiralty. The decks of both were crowded with American and British soldiers. Among them were picked military and naval specialists whose job was to nail the members of the German and Italian Armistice commissions, link up with the patriots and in various other ways prepare the city for the entrance of the forces that would be converging on it from right and left.

The Colonel of a Minnesota regiment was the commanding officer on one ship.

"I want you men to hit that dock hard," he said, "then light out like stripy-arsed baboons up the wharf until you can get some cover. Then fight like hell."

The order was duly written down in the night's orders. "Action on landing: Run like stripy-arsed baboons for nearest cover. Then fight like hell."

Suddenly the lights of the city went out. The destroyers had been discovered. Searchlights began to sweep the harbour entrance. One destroyer headed for the booms. She was caught in a searchlight's glare. Shore batteries began firing.

Commandos had been ashore, entered one of the shore battery emplacements and found it unoccupied. The Commandos moved on without leaving a guard behind. Now the French guncrews had manned the guns and were firing at the destroyers.

A heavy shell hit the destroyer that was approaching the booms. The craft lost way. It slowed down to two or three knots. Machine-gun fire and light shellfire began to sweep the deck and American boys were killed and wounded before they ever saw the coast of Africa plainly. At that slow speed the destroyer could not hope to break through the booms so she turned away and began to limp up the coast.

The second destroyer was more lucky. She hit the booms at full speed, broke through and in the greying light of dawn sped for one of the central docks. Her guns were going as she returned the shore batteries' fire.

The landing was made. But by that time Darlan's resistance order had gone out. The whole city was alert. Under orders, Vichy troops and police retook the Post Office and the Government buildings. The opportunity of walking into the city had been missed because intelligence officers of the attacking Allies had not been informed of what was happening inside. Some of the patriots were killed and wounded. The rest were prisoners.

The Admiralty building sticking out into Algiers Harbour was in communication with Marseilles and Toulon. Radios all over the world were crackling reports, news, orders.

With only the troops that could be carried on one destroyer, the attempt to take Algiers by a frontal assault failed. The attacking force was pinned to the dock on which it landed. Through the morning they fought back at the guns that raked them, but they could not advance. The heavy guns of the harbour evidently couldn't be depressed enough to hit the destroyer lying close up against the wharf, but for the entire morning she was spattered with streams of rifle and machine-gun and light cannon fire.

At length in the early afternoon it was realized that to stay longer might mean the loss of the ship and all the men. The destroyer blew the recall signal. Those troops who could climbed aboard and she successfully ran the gauntlet of shells out to sea.

First-Class Private Harold Cullum, a Pennsylvania boy, was probably the luckiest man on the dock among the wounded. At eight o'clock in the morning, while he was firing his machine-gun, a French rifle bullet blew a hole in his abdomen, another in his arm.

He felt no pain, only two heavy blows. He looked down and saw the bullet had driven chunks of his clothing and equipment into his stomach-wound. Cullum kept his head. He unpacked his first-aid kit and sprinkled his ration of sulfanilamide powder on to his open stomach wound. He was not bleeding much. With his field dressing bandage, he wrapped up his arm wound. Then between sips of water from his canteen, he ate all his twelve sulfanilamide tablets.

He lay on the dock in the sun all day while the bullets spattered about him. When the recall whistle blew, he tried to crawl back to the end of the pier. He fell fainting. A French tank picked him up during the afternoon and took him to a hospital. In spite of the terrible stomach wound, Cullum recovered—probably because the sulfanilamide had prevented infection.

The landings up and down the coast had been successfully negotiated. The first French expedition that conquered Algeria landed at Cape Sidi Ferruch, fifteen miles west of Algiers. This part of the coast is a summer resort for Algerians with not a great deal of money. There are little cottages and a fishing village there. A little café in a pine-grove is called "Robinson" after the famous "Robinson"

restaurant in the tree near Paris. On hot summer Sundays, boys and girls, young men and young women bicycle out to Sidi Ferruch to have lunch and spend the day swimming in the breezes that make the Cape far more cool than Algiers itself.

De Gaullist patriots were on some of the beaches. Tanks were landed in one area. Patriotic French officers like General Mast—now at long last lifted from the disgrace his action brought him among Vichy officers and officials during the first months of our occupation and appointed Regent of Tunisia—helped us.

With General Mast was another fine and honourable French officer, Colonel Baril. He too put his love of country above the orders of his superiors. Months later he was killed in Syria in an aeroplane crash. To those of us who cared much for France, it was the Barils and the Fighting French Koenigs and Leclercs who represented the only France that was worth anything to the rest of the world. Their honour and courage stood out in sharp relief against the background of slimy Vichy backstairs intrigue and the cautious self-interestedness of some of the characters with whom we dealt.

One strange lack of preparedness showed up in this and other landings. The American commanders had neglected to send with each landing party officers who spoke French. This led to some difficulties. Nobody has ever explained why officers and men speaking French and Arabic were not included in every detachment that went ashore. William Stoneman, a veteran foreign correspondent, found himself doing a liaison job, translating for both American and French commanders.

Later, when the accounts were straightened out, it was found that lack of French-speaking American personnel had caused delays in both military movements and military negotiations.

Signal lights from Allied sympathizers on the beach showed that all was clear. Landing craft ran in through the breakers. As each boatload hit the shore, the men ran across the beach, stopped and put on the dry shoes and socks they carried slung around their necks. The men cheered as they swept across the beach. With no opposition, bull-dozers

were put ashore and a road was cut from the beach to the main coast road to Algiers. Then guns, armoured cars and supplies were landed.

Nearer Algiers at Cap Caxine, British troops landed to take a lighthouse and radio station. The keeper of the village bistro was asleep. A British officer kicked open the door of the bedroom and leaped into the centre of the floor swinging his Tommy-gun. The frightened bistro keeper said: "Who are you?"

"British and American forces," the officer replied. "You are my prisoner."

"Thank God," said the other as he tumbled out of bed. "Long live the Allies. Long live Britain. Long live America. Long live France. Allow me, sir, to treat you and your men to some champagne."

Downstairs the owner of the bistro broke out the champagne he had concealed from the Axis armistice commission. Drinks were on the house. English soldiers made some tea. Between swigs of tea and champagne they all sang "Tipperary" and "Madelon." Cap Caxine had been taken.

One platoon of Americans heading for Algiers stopped a Spaniard's hansom cab, and loaded their mortar and ammunition on to it. Passing through the coastal village of Chiraga they were met by the mayor, who offered them anything they wanted in the town.

It was not until the troops had circled around to enter Algiers through El Biar, a suburb on the heights three or four miles behind the city, that they met opposition. Vichy-sympathizing officers were organizing resistance. Scattered machine-guns opened up and the Americans had to clean them up with rifle fire and grenades as they moved forward.

Some Germans and Italians in civilian clothing sniped at the advancing troops. Most of them were silenced without difficulty. An armoured car bounced on to the scene and was driven off by a fusillade of automatic fire. Up on a roof-top a British officer fired clip after clip of his Tommy-gun to cover the advance of a patrol of Iowa boys around a blind corner that was being spattered with machine-gun fire. This was one of the earliest recorded examples of British

and American co-operation—the forerunner of what was to come.

One platoon reached the luxurious German consulate high on the east side of the city overlooking the sea, just as the German consul-general leaped into his car. The Americans stopped his flight by shooting holes in his tyres.

By Monday morning the defences had been overcome and the Americans and British were ready to walk into the city of Algiers itself. An armistice had been signed, but in any case the Allies had the city to do with as they wished.

Fifteen miles or so east of Algiers, the American combat teams that landed at Cape Matifou headed for their chief objective, the big Maison Blanche aerodrome. They arrived on the field at dawn, but could find nobody in authority either to surrender the aerodrome or order it to be defended.

Most of the French officers lived some distance from the aerodrome. A bus picked them up every morning. Picked R.A.F. ground crews—nicknamed the “R.A.F. Commandos”—who take over newly captured aerodromes, by force if necessary, were marching towards Maison Blanche that morning when they met the French officers’ bus. They stopped it, turned it around, piled in and went bowling along the road to arrive at the airfield well ahead of schedule. The R.A.F. Group Captain who was to command the aerodrome arrived just behind them in a jeep.

At dawn a squadron of Hurricanes took off from their base. They arrived over Maison Blanche and spotted the strip signal on the ground indicating that the aerodrome was in Allied hands. Some of the American soldiers had torn up their undershirts to make the signal.

The R.A.F. Wing-Commander who led the squadron landed to investigate while the rest of his planes circled the field. If the signal was faked the Hurricanes would have to land anyway. They did not have enough fuel to make the return flight.

The Wing-Commander landed, walked up to a group of people standing on the field, and saluted his Group Captain.

It was a historic moment—the capture of the chief Algerian aerodrome—but nobody quite knew what to say. What the Wing-Commander did say—and I have this on the authority of Squadron Leader Michael Rooke, D.F.C.

—was: "Nice spot of fine weather you're having here, sir."

During the afternoon more fighters arrived, among them a squadron of Spitfires. At dusk, thirty Junkers bombers headed for Algiers. Without loss to themselves, the Allied fighters destroyed twelve and damaged ten more.

Blida aerodrome—inland from Algiers—had been occupied by American troops and British Fleet Air Arm fighters. The French commander of the Blida area was friendly.

Elsewhere the Allied invasion had not been so successful. American parachute troops had set out from England on the longest parachute flight in history, 1,700 miles. The parachute troops themselves had been well briefed on the terrain on which they would land. But the American pilots who brought them had been given their briefing only a few hours before the flight began. A scheme to give the pilots radio direction to their objectives could not be brought into effect.

For many hours the paratroops huddled in the plane thinking of the jump that would end their flight. The planes went astray. Some force-landed in Spanish Morocco and all the American personnel were interned. Others wound up far away from their objectives. I know of not one single instance in which the parachutists were dropped on their intended objective.

When they did land, cold and cramped by the long flight, they were not in fighting condition. The men were experienced and well trained, but the flight proved that only as a last resort should parachutists be forced to endure such a long flight before jumping.

One plane landed in a big salt bed, the Sebokra, south of Oran. Other planes joined them to take them on to the Oran airfield. On the way, French Dewoitine fighters attacked them. Of the one hundred men in the planes, five were killed and fifteen wounded. When they landed, the Dewoitines strafed them twice on the ground. But the tough parachutists fired back with their automatic weapons and had the satisfaction of shooting down two of the six low-flying Vichy aircraft.

The Oran landings had been difficult. The French commander of the area, after first deciding to co-operate with us, vacillated, changed his mind and ordered full resistance.

Landing barges were sunk by shell fire as they neared the shore. Men from General Terry Allen's First Infantry Division carried out the landings against strong resistance. They had a real baptism of fire and suffered comparatively severe casualties. But by the time the armistice was signed they had the situation well under control.

In Morocco, General Nogues, whom his subordinates had nicknamed General No-Yes, at first decided to string along with the Allies. It had been arranged that one of his generals should—in order to give Nogues the face-saving excuse of being forced to co-operate with the Allies—put Nogues under purely nominal arrest.

As zero hour neared, the general rang up Nogues, told him that a powerful allied force backed by the full strength of the American Navy was about to land in Morocco. The general would be around in half an hour to arrest Nogues.

When I talked with him in Rabat, Nogues impressed me as being a very canny person. Yet some of his actions belied that impression.

Now Nogues began to hedge his bets. He called Admiral Michelier, the Casablanca naval commander, a Fascist-minded officer who hated the Allies, the French Republic, and the idea of democracy in general. Nogues gave Michelier the information that he had heard a report that a large American naval force was approaching the shore of Morocco.

Michelier snapped back: "You can be sure, General Nogues, that no American warship is within a thousand miles of Morocco at this moment."

So it was all a trick, Nogues thought, perhaps a British commando raid or something of the kind. Well, these Americans and British would find that Nogues was not a man to be trifled with.

He was conferring with some of his officers when the patriotic French general entered.

"General Nogues," said the Allied sympathizer, "in the name of France and of France's allies who are at this moment landing on the coast of Morocco, I put you under arrest. Resistance is useless and will only spill French and Allied blood needlessly."

Nogues hit the ceiling. "This insolent officer is rebelling against the authority of the French State," he declared to

his officers. "Imprison him at once. He will be tried by court martial as a traitor in the morning."

Orders went out at once to arrest American officials. Full resistance must be organized and carried out at all points. The whole coast was now alert. To Michelier the information went that an Allied raid was in progress. It should be wiped out with French naval forces if necessary.

Underneath the guns of American warships, landings were being made all up and down the coast. Each one was contested. The surf runs high along the Atlantic coast of Morocco and at points like Fedala and Port Lyautey the landings were not easy to make.

Michelier's naval force showed fight and had to be dealt with. The battleship, *Jean Bart*, immobilized since the British crippled part of the French fleet in July, 1940, opened up from her dock in Casablanca Harbour and had to be shelled by American battleships.

I have driven along that coast and seen the wrecks of some of the American landing barges and some of the French ships that were scuttled, still pounding on the beach. Up at Port Lyautey is an American cemetery. Rows of white crosses are all that marks the bitter little battle fought over the hills and meadows near the coast outlined a mile or two away by the never changing line of white breakers. That was the result of two and a half years of German propaganda spoken through the Vichy mouthpiece. In spite of the fact that we had honeycombed North Africa with our diplomats, we never counteracted or, as far as I know, tried to counteract the one-sided interpretation of the war given to French troops and civilians by Fascist officers and Fascist officials.

In spite of all our opportunities, we did not make sure that the French forces in North Africa would welcome us when we landed. We did not use the fact that most of North Africa through two and a half bitter years had wanted the Allies to win the war and had wanted France to be liberated. So some Americans and some Frenchmen died.

Months later, Merrill Mueller, of *Newsweek*, and I had dinner with a couple of Lafayette Escadrille fighter pilots. Both had fought the Americans in Morocco. In the course of the evening one even boasted slightly that he had shot

down two American fliers. His boasting was the boasting of a professional soldier.

The two Frenchmen naïvely admitted that German control of North Africa was so complete—in spite of Nogues's claim that he and not the Germans ran the territory—that they themselves had never been allowed to make a practice flight without German permission. They told us that the Germans controlled all fuel, all planes and all armament in French North Africa.

Then they repeated the nonsense that Goebbels had been dinning into their ears for years—that Britain pushed France into the war, that Britain deserted France at Dunkirk; that she kept the bulk of her armaments in England instead of sending them to France; and finally, that the American Army didn't really like or think much of the British Army.

Remember this was more than two months after our landing. Mueller and I spent the whole evening puncturing these ideas, giving them facts and figures in refutation and showing the tales up as the Berlin-made stories they were. We told them, as you might tell a child, that when America was neutral and Pétain and the defeatists had given up the fight, Britain fought alone—for herself mainly, of course, but also for France and for America.

When we finished, the two French fliers said: "But why don't you, our allies, tell us these things? We want to know the truth."

Later, one of those fliers was killed flying an American pursuit plane against the Germans, fighting shoulder to shoulder with the Americans and the British. May he rest easy, poor fellow. He paid for his first mistake and the fault was not so much his as his superiors'—the Fascist lick-spittles we pampered and petted so long in Vichy and in North Africa.

American warships were just about to smash Casablanca with broadsides of many tons of high explosives when the French asked for an armistice.

In an old fortress near Port Lyautey, American diplomats were negotiating with the local French commander. Allied bombers swooped over and bombed the fortress. The negotiations were then speedily concluded in our favour.

General Nogues was berating an American consular official on the day of the invasion when he received a report that the Americans had landed tanks and were coming ashore in what looked like very strong force at many points along the coast.

Nogues's thin face turned grey. He began to pace up and down the room in a high state of nervousness.

"Why didn't you tell me this was a REAL invasion," he wailed to the American. "Michelier deceived me. I thought it was just a raid. To-morrow you would be gone and I should be left to explain to Pétain why I had not stopped you. Of course I would have co-operated with you if I had known. Tanks? Why didn't someone tell me you were really going to land tanks?"

All other Algeria and Morocco members of the German and Italian armistice commissions, who had fastened on the territory with an iron grip and bled it white of all its food and of manufactured goods as well, were making preparations to escape.

In the middle of the night the invasion began, members of the German commission in Algiers shifted out of the Hotel Aletti to the Hotel d'Angleterre across the street. The "Angleterre" had been taken over by the Italians. Off came the gorgeous German and Italian uniforms and into civilian clothing most of them went. But the town was surrounded and they did not know which way to turn.

In Casablanca the French had microphoned the rooms of the Germans and Italians at the "Plaza." They recorded for posterity among other things some extremely interesting passages between the wife of a German consul and one of the more dashing members of the Italian commission, as well as evidence of the German Consul-general's peculiar passion for a stupid young man of German-Jewish extraction.

The Americans afterwards discovered and neutralized one of the French listening posts, but they could not be sure they had found them all. Even as much as three months later we reporters in Casablanca carefully refrained from discussing anything important in our hotel rooms and went out into the wide open spaces for our talks in case some little French Fascist might be jotting it all down. Whether

other Americans in Casablanca were as careful I do not know.

Some of the chief German agents we had hoped to get escaped to the borders of Spanish Morocco and Franco's Moroccan governor, Orgaz, gave them sanctuary in Tangiers until they were ready to depart for Germany.

Far off in Tunis, hundreds of miles from the nearest Allied soldier, members of the Axis armistice commission began hurriedly to pack their valises and trunks. It was some days before they felt safe enough to unpack them again.

To sum up the invasion itself, one may call it a stiff minor action that would teach the British and American forces valuable lessons. The bulk of the people welcomed the Allies as saviours. Only here and there a few Fascist-minded officials and officers ordered resistance, but under the conditions real resistance was impossible. Most men and officers in the army felt the same as the civilian population about us.

By the time the armistice was signed, the invading forces had achieved all their most important objectives. Without the armistice there might have been further resistance, but it could have been only a few hours' fighting in spots by a few hundred men. Darlan did us no great favour by signing an armistice with us. He knew the battle was lost anyway.

The question now was whether the French forces would follow their natural inclination and co-operate with us. For a few the Vichy propaganda against us had left too deep a mark.

Two of the pilots of the Lafayette Escadrille so far disgraced the great Marquis's name as to steal planes and fly off to Marseilles to join the Germans. From France they broadcast a lurid horror-story of the Anglo-American invasion and appeals to other French airmen to join them. Then they ceased broadcasting. I heard indirectly that Fighting French patriots in Marseilles tracked down these two misguided traitors and ended the possibility of their ever broadcasting again anywhere. I do not know whether that was true. Certainly most of North Africa was pleased to think so.

CENSOR OR SURREALIST?

An Interlude

CENSOR. *Murdock, this story of yours looks very doubtful to me. It certainly touches politics.*

MURDOCK. *But Bob—(for Bob substitute Maurice, Mac, Alex or almost any other name at will)—but Bob, there is nothing in this story a child would object to. Look. All I say is: "The theory that Darlan is admired or even respected by the greater part of the population of North Africa finds no substantiation in fact. Darlan and Nogues conferred to-day." Certainly all that is true.*

CENSOR. *Of course it's true. Nobody doubts that. You know the code name that was used for him, YBSOB, Y-B-S-O-B. But you still can't talk politics.*

MURDOCK. *But the public surely has the right to know that all is not rosy in North Africa. One of these days there'll be an explosion that can't be covered up.*

CENSOR. *I agree with everything you say and the way you say it, but I still can't permit any discussion of politics.*

MURDOCK. *But nobody can tell me what we can or can't say about politics. Do you know?*

CENSOR. *Nobody ever tells us anything. We have been asking for directives and nobody ever sends them to us. Besides, I'm an officer, sent here to censor the military security. There's no military security involved in what you want to say. I'm supposed to stop you from saying things like "Sherman tanks are being used at the front" or "We sent a new convoy to Bone yesterday." As far as I'm concerned you can take all this politics and do you know what with it. As far as I'm concerned I'm sick and tired of trying to cover up for Darlan and I don't care who knows it. But I still can't let you discuss politics. I agree with your point of view. I know that there probably aren't five hundred Frenchmen in North Africa who are enthusiastic about Darlan. I agree the public should be informed of that. But my hands are tied.*

MURDOCK. *Can I merely say, then, that Darlan is not the most highly respected man in North Africa?*

CENSOR. *No. That would be giving the story a political slant. If you want to cut out all the words except "Darlan is admired" I can take a chance and pass that much.*

MURDOCK. *But that's not true, as you admit.*

CENSOR. *Yes, I guess you're right, although I probably wouldn't get into any trouble over it.*

MURDOCK. *How about saying merely that Darlan and Nogues conferred? That's in the afternoon papers.*

CENSOR. *No, not on your life. It would be as much as my job is worth. I don't see any harm in it myself, but politics are barred.*

MURDOCK. *But this is getting downright silly.*

CENSOR. *Admitted; and I came to North Africa thinking I was going to do an important military job that required intelligence and diligence! What a laugh!*

MURDOCK. *But who's responsible for this censorship? Who can explain it to me? Murphy?*

CENSOR. *I wouldn't know the answer to that one. We're military censors and he's a civilian. Perhaps Eisenhower or the G2.*

MURDOCK. *But they're soldiers and don't concern themselves with politics. Beside they always leave it to you fellows to decide what can and can't be said.*

CENSOR. *Funny, isn't it. Maybe one of the political warfare boys might take the responsibility of censoring it.*

MURDOCK. *But they aren't censors. They'd just say the same thing, that they entirely agree, but censoring isn't their job.*

CENSOR. *I guess you're stuck with it then. You could say it in New York or London, but not here.*

MURDOCK. *In that case I'll rewrite the story and make it a story about mud at the front. All right?*

CENSOR. *Sure the Germans know the weather at the front. And do me a favour will you? Put in a lot of forbidden things about new types of weapons, names of divisions, and all that kind of thing. I want to cut them out and have the pleasure of knowing again that I'm being some value in the world.*

MURDOCK. *I'll be back in an hour with the new story and a bottle of Miliana. It will do us both good. (Goes out as CENSOR thoughtfully chews his blue pencil to shreds.)*

CHAPTER IV

THEY ALSO SERVE?

I WALKED down the gang-plank of our liner to the Algiers dock before dawn on the morning of November 13th. All the previous day we had lain at anchor out in the sunlit harbour watching transports and freighters move in and out against the background of the white city and sniffing the spicy, perfumed, salt smell of the air. We were close enough to see through our glasses the big sign on one white building "Casino Municipal."

Now with tin hat on, musette bag slung on my shoulders, gas-mask and water bottle bumping at my hip, I staggered on to the wharf yanking my filled barracks bag behind me. The barracks bag and equipment were so heavy I knew that walking more than a hundred yards would be impossible. We waited until mid-morning for some transport. William Stoneman, of the *Chicago Daily News*, and Drew Middleton of the *New York Times*, showed up in a borrowed car, paused long enough to tell us we'd missed some great action and some fine stories, and bolted off again. We sent word by them to a public relations officer that we had arrived. He came with a car about 2 p.m. as we were slinging our luggage and Winner's cameras aboard a truck.

"We're all fixed up with rooms, but I don't think you fellows have a chance of getting any place to stay. The town is jammed full," he told us cheerfully.

Through streets that looked like the streets of any ordinary city except for Arab fezes, robes and veils we made our way to the "Aletti" hotel, said to be Algiers' most modern hostelry, tossed our luggage into a correspondent's room and headed off for a conference with Lieut.-General—then Major-General—Mark Clark, General Eisenhower's deputy commander.

General Clark's conference had begun before we arrived at Headquarters. I recognized most of the correspondents

there. They looked serious. General Clark, young, black-haired, sat in his chair talking with an easy, informed assurance.

He was just announcing astonishing news. The Allies had chosen as head of the French Government in North Africa Admiral Darlan, the Vichyite of Vichyites who again and again in public speeches and private conversation had expressed his pro-Axis bias.

We correspondents were dumbfounded. The story was something out of *Alice in Wonderland* being told, not by a Mad Hatter, but by an apparently sane and collected American general.

"Having reached this agreement," General Clark went on, "this Government we are setting up and creating will support the American military effort, will support us in the defence of North Africa and will resist aggression. Orders have gone out to resist any advance or the entrance of any German troops. . . . The terms of the armistice will be signed now by the head of the Government."

The story of the negotiations came out. General Giraud had been the original American choice for head of the North African Government. Rescued from France by submarine, he went to Eisenhower's headquarters in Gibraltar, then to Algiers.

Murphy and Clark rounded up Juin and Nogues for the conferences. When Giraud met Juin, some bitterness was momentarily evident. Juin accused Giraud of being a "traitor." But this bitterness was soon forgotten. Nogues, on arriving, announced that he had just been appointed supreme Commander-in-Chief in North Africa by Marshal Pétain.

Darlan walked into the room, talked with Nogues and in a few minutes Nogues announced that he himself had only been appointed Commander-in-Chief because the Marshal believed Darlan was a prisoner. Since Darlan was a free man, he, Nogues, turned over his rights as Commander-in-Chief to the Admiral.

Pétain, fuming and fulminating in Vichy, had not been consulted, but the explanation seemed to satisfy Darlan, Nogues and Juin. As the three Vichy commanders shifted about the power supposed to emanate in some mystical

manner from the octogenarian in Vichy, Giraud was left out in the cold.

Nobody, including the Americans, paused to consider that whoever the Americans and British wanted to name as boss of North Africa would have the support of the majority of the North Africans, whether he were de Gaulle or an insignificant member of the Blida town council.

The Vichyites had taken the ball away from the American negotiators and looked as though they were going to continue passing it about the bases all afternoon.

Giraud, who knew precisely nothing of popular feeling or politics, felt the ground slipping out from under him. The only three men in the room whose opinion he really respected, the two Vichy generals and the Vichy admiral, would have nothing to do with him in spite of the fact that the Americans backed him. In a fit of despair, he told Murphy and Clark that he could not lead a North African administration because nobody would obey him.

"You will have to ask Admiral Darlan to take on the responsibility of administering North Africa," Giraud said. With their own horse declining to run, Murphy and Clark had no choice but humbly to ask Darlan to lead a French Government of North Africa. Darlan agreed. The Admiral did make one concession to the Americans. Giraud could be commander-in-chief of the forces—just so long as he recognized Darlan as supreme head of the Government. Darlan and the rest managed to put over the idea that Giraud's appointment must not be announced for some time to come. They hinted at a popular uprising, revolt in the army, and numberless other disasters if the news were announced at once. The Americans apparently believed them.

Others at the conferences included another French admiral, and two British officers, Admiral Cunningham and Commodore Dick. General Clark spoke of it as a triumph that he had persuaded Darlan to shake hands with the two British officers. It was really a sign of Darlan's triumph that the British shook hands with him.

General Clark emphasized that Darlan's appointment had the approval of Marshal Pétain. A day or two later radio listeners in North Africa were treated to the sound of

Pétain's angry voice broadcasting a denunciation of Darlan as a traitor. Darlan, however, dismissed this as no longer a free expression of the Marshal's will and continued to give orders in the Marshal's name. This surrealistic situation continued until Darlan's death. French logic and the Pétain mystique never made a stranger combination of unrealities.

Neither Murphy nor Clark were apparently aware that, with all the aces and court cards in American hands, the Vichy military chiefs had won the pot. The chief hole-card the Vichy men played was fear. "Do what we want," they said in effect, "or you won't get any support from the French forces. Your bases will be uncertain. The French people and administrators will be against you. Without us, you are nothing. With us, you will achieve victory." It was a skilful argument and it had its effect. Eisenhower approved his deputies' decisions. This was an American show and the British Government trailed along, even though loud screams of dismay appeared in the British as in the American Press.

The only flaw in the Vichy men's argument was that it was entirely untrue. Nobody stopped to consider that the Americans could have appointed Giraud as supreme commander, and shot or imprisoned a dozen commanders and high officials, and the French forces would have co-operated just as much as they eventually did, and perhaps a bit more. Once we had landed in force in North Africa, there was never any danger of a new attack by the French on us. Any attempt on the part of a French commander would have led to open revolt by officers and men. When we landed the bulk of the population greeted us enthusiastically. With all the opinion of the country and the forces of American guns behind him, Eisenhower could have shuffled French commands and civilian appointments like a pack of cards. Instead, all this was left to Darlan and his henchmen.

It is difficult to criticize either General Eisenhower or General Clark. They were soldiers with a job to do. They knew nothing of French politics and the background of disasters, intrigues, hopes and fears that lay behind Darlan, Nogues, Giraud and Juin. The American generals took

what seemed to them to be the most immediately feasible plan to relieve their own anxiety about the safety of their bases and to free men for the expeditionary force that was already making its way into Tunisia.

"We are driving into Tunisia to kick Rommel in the back," Clark said. "We are being realistic. We cannot afford to risk our bases and lines of communication over a political squabble."

No, they were not to blame. They could not know the effect Darlan's appointment and the dim outline of American diplomatic policy would have on the population of North Africa, the Frenchmen in France and the peoples of other occupied countries.

But those who direct American policy in Washington should have realized the effect this appointment would have, and Murphy, diplomat, with years of experience in France, should have known. Now the step had been taken for better or worse. Clark hinted that if things did not go as we wished we could always oust Darlan. Every day Darlan held office, he strengthened his own grip on the reins. We could have eliminated Darlan at the beginning with ease. A week or two afterwards it had become impossible to eliminate him. We had given him control of the internal politics of North Africa and he used his power.

Once Murphy's too facile solution of the problem had been accepted and we had committed ourselves to Darlan with the formal announcement, the guard of honour and all the rest, Eisenhower as commander-in-chief was forced to back Darlan and defend his deputies' action. The United States, having taken the step, had to defend it against a storm of criticism; and the British Government, associated in the Allied venture, had to defend it too. As the consequences became apparent, Washington and London found that since the move was impossible to retract, the only possibility open to them was to brazen it out and pretend with argument and emphasis that all was well.

As the storm about Darlan began to blow up, the danger seemed very real that it might shake Eisenhower's position. To most correspondents it seemed unjust that at the outset of what promised to be a brilliant military career, Eisenhower should have to take responsibility for the political

turmoil in which he had been landed. He was always ready to shoulder responsibility for anything that happened in the area he commanded. It worried some correspondents greatly that he did not make it plain that he was responsible only in so far as he approved the political advice and the political policies presented ready-made to him by State Department experts.

We talked about it often among ourselves. One American press agency correspondent even went so far as to see one of the General's aides to impress on him that the Darlan business was loaded with dynamite.

Nor were the correspondents the only Americans to feel this. Some of the American diplomatic officials in North Africa were as thunderstruck as anyone in New York or London at the Darlan appointment. They too saw the possible consequences. But they were not in a position to express their point of view at home.

At General Clark's conference we learned that under Darlan the chiefs of the three North African territories would be General Nogues in Morocco; Governor Chatel, a confirmed pro-Axis Vichy administrator, in Algeria; and in Tunisia Admiral Esteva, at that moment busily engaged in helping the Germans to enter Tunisia. Esteva later refused Darlan's offer. He preferred to stay in Tunis and work with the Germans according to Pétain's orders. So the Allies with a certain amount of delicacy appointed, not a Regent of Tunisia, but a Vice-regent, General Jurion, who set up an administration at Le Kef in the Allied area of Tunisia. Esteva remained Regent and stayed in Tunis until the end.

It was a group of glum-faced reporters who left Headquarters. We had come to liberate North Africa. We wondered what the French would think when the news was made public. Would they feel we had come to liberate them, or to confirm the chains that bound them?

I had already learned that broadcasting might be difficult. So I sent off a cable to N.B.C.'s London office, summing up the official point of view as expressed by General Clark. I emphasized that according to this view the Darlan negotiations had been conducted on the basis of the strictest realism. The reactions of the French people, I said, were

unknown, but the scales had been tilted by the attitude of the Vichy commanders in North Africa and the necessity of ensuring the co-operation of the local French forces before making an Allied thrust eastward into Tunisia. The negotiators, I said, had to discard idealism to keep their base protected before attacking Rommel.

I believe that other correspondents' stories followed the same line. We gave the world as fair an account as was possible of the official explanation for the Darlan appointment.

Algiers was swarming with men in Allied uniform. Later, I learned that at heart Algiers is essentially as dull as any French provincial city. But in those early days Algiers had a sparkle. The conquerors had come to free North Africa and France from the Axis. Peace and plenty were just around the corner. *Vive la France! Vive la République! Vivent les Américains! Vivent les Anglais!*

The atmosphere was electric with the holiday spirit. American and British officers and men thronged the streets. Out in the harbour seventy-odd Allied transports and war vessels were being unloaded. Hourly new columns of infantry formed up on the docks and marched through the city to their billets outside. Tanks rumbled on the cobblestones, and troops and gangs of Arab longshoremen who were spurred to sustained effort for the first time in their lives, piled the wharfs with Allied war equipment.

The city, built on hill-slopes that triple the strain on automobile engines, now echoed with the exhausts of a thousand vehicles.

The "Aletti" bar was jammed with officers packed shoulder to shoulder to drink the *vin mousseux* that passed for champagne. Prices sky-rocketed as the Allied forces began spending the invasion bills issued on shipboard.

It was Carnival. It was Fiesta. It was Fête Day. The girls who last week had proudly appeared in public with German and Italian officers now donned their best frocks and headed for the "Aletti" bar to make their fortunes. Hurrah for the Allies. "I om *enchantée* to know you, *capitaine*. Yes, I will have a little champagne."

There was no limit to prices—one thousand, two thousand, three thousand francs; forty, sixty dollars. After all,

this is war. To-morrow we may be off to Tunisia. They say the Germans have landed. Some of us won't see home again, ever. And there won't be any girls at the front.

Some of the girls were making three sorties an hour. Sixty dollars an hour. Pretty good going!

The better-class women stayed at home. A French paper began running simple English lessons. One of the first phrases was: "No, sir. I am married and I am hurrying home, where my husband is awaiting me."

On the streets of Algiers were Arabs—Arabs in robes or in European dress and the red fez, women veiled to the eyes. For the most part, their veils and robes looked soiled. Only twice in nearly seven months in North Africa did I see an Arab woman of an evidently high class wearing spotless white robes of fine material. Passing through Arab villages you saw only the men, never the women. Next to the Arab women of Algiers walked European women as smartly dressed as those you would see in Paris or New York.

Algiers had a smoky history of war and conquest. The Phoenicians who founded the Carthaginian Empire; the Romans; the Vandals from the North; Belisarius, one of the world's three or four greatest generals, who reconquered North Africa for the Byzantine Empire; the fighting henchmen of the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire; and finally, the French—all had brought war to North Africa.

I tried to give the flavour of this in my broadcasts for N.B.C. I told of the Kasbah, the Arab section of Algiers, where American boys from Iowa, Missouri and Massachusetts found strange sounds and smells in the miles of twisting streets, but never the Hedy Lamarr that Hollywood cameramen viewed in the American film *Algiers*.

Algiers strikes you like that at the beginning. Afterwards it becomes just another city where you work hard, as ordinary as Dubuque or Lyons or Birmingham, without the vital fascination of New York or London or Paris. I was always glad to leave Algiers. The atmosphere of what the English call "base wallahs," the petty unreality of the political intrigues, the shallow stupidity evidenced in what French society existed in the city, contrasted strangely with the healthier, more honest life at the front. Yet I was always glad to get back to Algiers from the front. In any city you

develop a mode of existence that becomes familiar, and the routine of life in the hotel room that my old friend and room-mate Merrill Mueller and I afterwards called "Fox-hole 127," with work and broadcast, work and broadcast, following one another, became something you knew and could endure, even though you did not like it.

Algiers restaurants remained incredibly bad, throughout our stay, to men who had known France. They were overcrowded and the food was poor and expensive. Italian waiters leaned over your table to pick up any bits of military information. The Axis had taken most of the food out of Algiers. One plane loaded with choice foods consigned to Germany was captured on Maison Blanche aerodrome, but most went by water to Marseilles and thence by special train to Germany. The Vichy controllers, of course, told the people it all went to France. Months later, the Algiers Press was allowed to spill the whole story that the outside world had known for years. What food had not been stolen by the Axis found its way to the Algerian black market. This was a flourishing and semi-respectable concern with undoubted Government connections. You could get a good meal in black market restaurants—usually outside the city—but you paid more than you would have paid in New York or even London. These restaurants were too expensive for the ordinary Frenchman, but diplomats, Allied officers, war correspondents and the French upper class kept them well filled night after night.

The first concern of Collingwood and myself was to arrange a broadcast. We were competitors. Living near each other in London and in Algiers, we rarely met outside our working hours. We knew the same people, but inevitably chose different friends. Our business contacts, the men from whom we sought information, were entirely different. I can remember no time in our association, which has now lasted since Collingwood joined Columbia two years ago, when we ever went out on a non-business party together or entered on any intimate personal discussion. Yet time after time during the North African campaign we found that our broadcasts came to the same conclusion at the same time. We dovetailed and confirmed each other without either of us knowing beforehand what his rival would say.

Our first joint work was to arrange our broadcasting facilities. The Algiers short-wave station had not been sabotaged. American troops took it over. It was not a very good transmitter. Twelve years old, it had been patched up and put together well enough for the French to use it a few hours every week. The Allies wanted to use it at least eighteen hours a day. Signal Corps officers were too busy with army communications to give us a great deal of assistance. We would have to deal directly with the French to arrange facilities on the transmitter which was controlled by the Allied Force but, since the Armistice, run by the French.

Lieutenant-Colonel Johnston, of the Welsh Guards, was then the chief of Allied political warfare. He introduced us to the head of French broadcasting. From then on it was to be up to ourselves. Together Collingwood and I passed through the offices of half a dozen French radio officials. Yes, the American radio men could use French facilities. Not the Radio Algiers studios, please. The French did not want men in American uniform to be seen going in and out of the studios. This would be a reflection on French independence. Perhaps we could find a room somewhere which the French engineers would be delighted to turn into a studio for us. But not in Radio Algiers, please. To Collingwood and me, who were used to B.B.C. studios and the friendly co-operation of everyone from the B.B.C. Governors down, the contrast was striking.

Peter Tomkins, of the Political Warfare Section, offered us desk space in one of his hotel rooms. Two French engineers set up our microphone. The radio material looked dusty and worn out. But after more than twenty-four hours of negotiation, arrangements and effort, we were ready to start.

Robert Dunnett, of the B.B.C., got first crack, by common consent. Then came Collingwood, and finally myself. None of us knew whether New York or London was expecting us, or whether the broadcast would get through. I hoped that Dunnett's and Collingwood's signals might be heard by the N.B.C. engineers, who would then be warned when to expect me. All our broadcasts were beamed on London since we knew the transmitter was powerful enough to reach Paris, but had no idea that it was powerful

enough to reach New York directly. I hoped that Dunnett's and Collingwood's broadcast would give the B.B.C. engineers, my London office, and the N.B.C. engineers in New York as well as Radio Terminal and A. T. and T. engineers in Britain and America a chance to prepare to receive my broadcast. It turned out much as I expected. As far as I know, Dunnett's broadcast was not picked up. The last minute of Collingwood's got through to Columbia, and my own was received *in toto* by N.B.C., the first full broadcast from North Africa.

For days neither Collingwood nor I knew whether our broadcasts were getting through. Later we found the majority of them had been received. For two or three weeks we worked out of that smoky hotel room. French engineers twiddled dials. Occasionally the circuit to the transmitter would break down and we would all miss our broadcasts. By day the microphone and other equipment would be shoved in a corner and the room would become a political warfare workroom. At night we took over. When German night raids against Algiers shut down the transmitter—because of fear lest it should be used as a direction point by the German bombers—we concentrated on America's morning broadcasts one o'clock in the afternoon by Algerian time.

The engineers themselves, young Frenchmen, were friendly and helpful. Occasionally they were something more. In one night raid a German time-bomb fell near a vital point that linked our hotel room with the transmitter. The building was evacuated. It looked as though our broadcasts must be stopped indefinitely.

Then one of the French engineers volunteered to enter the building and keep the circuit open. For more than an hour he sat over the unexploded bomb so that our broadcasts could get through. When it was over I drove down to the building. Streets were roped off for many blocks away. I passed the police cordon, went to the building and picked up the engineer. I was only in the place for ten minutes, but I felt they were a trying ten minutes. He had been there for an hour. That was about one-thirty in the afternoon. About four a deep explosion made buildings in the centre of Algiers tremble. The bomb had gone off.

My first broadcast dealt with my impressions of Algiers, the Algerian crowd's reaction to the truckloads of German and Italian Armistice commission members on their way to a British ship and internment. In that first broadcast I came up against another problem that was to make objective reporting of the North African scene a wearing, difficult and, at times, impossible task—censorship.

The censors who censored press and radio copy were American and British Army and Air Force officers. They had been trained for their jobs—censoring for military security. They were intelligent, sympathetic and utterly ruthless where any question of military security was involved.

Suddenly they were ordered to censor all political stories. This stupid order placed them in a quandary. Like most Americans and Britishers they believed in the right of the correspondent to criticize a political move and the right of the public to know all the facts in any political development. Under the new arbitrary rule they must censor statements with which they fully agreed. They must flout the rights of correspondents and public to obey an order which to them, as to every correspondent, seemed senseless. None of us disagreed with the necessity of censorship for military security. Men's lives might hang on a carelessly written phrase. But to a man we, correspondents and censors alike, disagreed with the decision to bolster up a Fascist régime in North Africa by stifling the truth that all of us knew.

Yet an army order was an army order. The censors might not like it, but they had to obey. It was a tribute to their ability and integrity that correspondents and censors remained close personal friends for seven months, even while the censors were slashing correspondents' reports to bits.

In my broadcasts I described the first results of Darlan's appointment as civil and political boss of North Africa.

I said: "It is pointed out as a choice of expediency. We had to have the Vichy officers on our side. The Vichy administration took up control of local affairs again yesterday. One of Darlan's first moves was to arrest hundreds of Fighting Frenchmen who have worked against the Axis for the Allies and French freedom. General Clark is keeping

his hands off local administration. He said that, in effect, in a statement to the French to-day. All I know about the local political situation is that many of our friends are paying for their friendship. French honesty and courage aren't getting any rewards in North Africa to-night."

The censors could not pass this statement. Yet they knew it was true, so they handed it on to the highest military authority in the area. This authority censored it entirely.

One of the first things I attempted to do was to sound out public opinion on the Darlan appointment. I was lucky in that I could speak French. On purpose I did not then or ever during my stay attempt to get in touch with Fighting Frenchmen who I was pretty sure were working under cover in Algiers. I would make my own soundings, search out my own news in my own way. Then I would tell the story as I got it, and nobody could accuse me of bias for or against any particular political group in North Africa. My only bias was one that is common to a good many Americans, a belief in democracy, the right of the common man to have a say in his own destiny.

I went into a big department store to buy some perfume for my wife and Mildred Boutwood and Florence Peart of N.B.C's London staff. The girl behind the counter told me she had two ambitions, first to crush the Germans, and secondly to get rid of the Vichyites who took France out of the war. She became very angry when we spoke of Darlan and said: "You, monsieur, will find real Frenchmen and Frenchwomen here. When you think of France, think of them, not of Darlan and his crowd."

In the barber's shop the woman behind the counter was even more vehement.

"Can you explain to me what the Americans are doing?" she asked. "We believed they were coming to free us from these Chatels and these Darlans, this *canaille* of Vichy. Now we find that everything is to go on as it was before. What does it mean? Is it all a trick and will you suddenly execute them one night?"

An Arab at a shoe-shine stand looked around quickly when I mentioned Darlan and Chatel. He shook his finger warningly. "*Pas bon. Pas bon,*" he said. (Not good, not good.)

In a restaurant, the waiter shook his head and made a face when I asked him how he liked the new Government. But he would not answer by word of mouth.

A small French business man said: "I, Monsieur, am a Republican. These men are all Fascists. Yet they say the Americans support them, and they tell us we must now cease collaborating with the Germans and fight on the American side. We have heard these men say many things in this last two years. Do you think anyone will believe them now?"

A Jewish doctor said: "It will not make much difference to me. I welcomed your arrival and tried to help you. Now you are here I am still not allowed to practise my profession. And the same men who prevented me and forced me to become a day labourer remain in power, with the permission of the Americans."

A French Army officer said: "These are the same men who surrendered. You will find the Fascists will still hold control of the army. Beware! One day they may try to use it against you."

A hotel barman said: "They have tricked you. When you entered Algiers, you held it in the palm of your hand. It seems to me the Americans are not very good at politics. Why did you do it?"

So it went on. Through the days that followed I questioned many people. A very few were satisfied. They were mostly officials appointed by Vichy who hoped they would continue to hold their jobs. The great majority of people I talked with were profoundly disillusioned. They had expected something better from us than the announcement that we had thrown our full support to the same old Fascist gang. Bitter feeling had grown up through the past two years between the democratic element in North Africa and the Vichyites. Our coming had brought high hopes to the democratic Frenchmen. Those hopes were dashed when they were packed into jail by the same Fascist officials. The concentration camps had new arrivals since we had founded a North African French régime. Many of the young men who held the key points in Algiers during those early morning hours of November 8th had been captured. Our deal with Darlan sealed their immediate future.

As late as November 13th, when I arrived in Algiers, de Gaullists were still being beaten up in front of the Admiralty. No Allied officer was allowed to enter the Admiralty.

The curve of American prestige in North Africa was at its highest during the first two or three days of our occupation. It dropped sharply after Darlan took over. Further blunders caused it to drop even more in later weeks.

On the other hand, British prestige—which was never as low as we supposed when the first British troops to land announced themselves as Americans and wore U.S. flags on their arms, stayed fairly level for the time being, then commenced a steady rise. The great mass of the French people in North Africa realized that our diplomacy was an American diplomacy. Murphy, Eisenhower and Clark were too much in evidence for them to think otherwise in spite of the Allied character of the campaign.

Our prestige with the French Army also dropped. Various officers had risked their lives and their careers to help us. For a day or two it looked as though their exertions would bring them reward and honour. Then we handed the army, along with everything else that was French in North Africa, back to the Fascists. Giraud alone seemed helpless against the carefully hand-picked Vichy officers' clique that controlled the army. Generals who helped us were in disgrace. One had to hide for days in the bedroom of an American consular official. They were looked on as traitors. The Vichyites did not dare openly court-martial them. Eisenhower had insisted that they be protected. In spite of that, it was safer for one general to flee to Gibraltar. Other officers were put in compulsory retirement. Their superiors scorned them. One Vichy officer openly boasted to me that if he ever met General Mast, his superior in rank, in public he would smash him in the face. Later at Allied insistence some of these officers were given special jobs, liaison with Fighting French colonies, missions to England or America, jobs at Allied headquarters. A straightforward career in the army had become impossible for them, because they had helped the Allies. This was their reward.

After my own personal survey of French opinion, it was with some natural scepticism that I heard official Allied

spokesmen explain that the new Government was popular in North Africa and would be of immeasurable help to us. As for the official explanations that appeared in Washington and London, they seemed to be based on no information at all.

I knew what the French people in North Africa thought, but nobody else seemed at first to know or care. I was not to be allowed to tell what I had found. I was to be allowed to tell nothing at all.

A bitter choice confronted me. I could do what some other correspondents did, stick entirely to reporting the campaign, the military movements. This would not be dishonest and it was what people at home were probably most anxious to hear.

Or I could use the knowledge I had of the French to report the whole political and military situation. This course would be to risk unpopularity with officials in North Africa and at home because an honest account of the facts would imply criticism of my own countrymen. I felt the public should know enough of what was happening to make their own judgments. I did not think that criticism of a political move would affect the success of the campaign. There was even a possibility that criticism might bring changes that would help the campaign.

For me, I knew there was only one choice I could make. If my own father had negotiated that Darlan deal, I would have criticized him for it. Never in any broadcast did I try to say anything that I would not—and did not—say openly to General Eisenhower and Mr Murphy in private conversation. I felt the deal had harmed American prestige and America's future relations with France.

I had taken the decision, but putting it into practice was going to be difficult. Censorship frustrated all my early attempts to make even oblique references to the political situation. I could not even point out facts that were of the utmost importance in determining the American public's judgment of political events.

For instance, I talked with some Americans who escaped from Tunis. Based on their information, I tried to broadcast the news that all the French forces in Tunis had moved out and left the city defenceless. Admiral Esteva, the Vichy

Regent, had ordered that Axis planes be allowed to use the big Alouina airfield near Tunis. Not a shot was fired when Axis fighters, bombers and troop carriers began to land.

This story was censored. Allied authorities still recognized the authority of Esteva as Regent of Tunisia. It would never do to put this colleague of Darlan's in an unfavourable light.

The policy of collaborating with the French had begun. The trouble was that we were collaborating with the wrong Frenchmen. We kept up the polite fiction that nothing must be done without the permission of the French—and that meant the permission of the Vichyite officials.

An American officer summed up our situation graphically. "When we came to North Africa," he said, "my boss was an English general. He called a meeting of all the French officials that had anything to do with his particular line of work. When the Frenchmen arrived, the English general was sitting in his dirty mud-smearred battledress behind a desk. On the desk lay his big, loaded forty-five pistol, pointed towards the Frenchmen. Behind him stood a group of tough-looking officers armed to the teeth.

"The British general pointed to one after another of the French officials. 'You do this,' he said, 'you, this; and you, the other thing.' They jumped to do it. Everything went like clockwork. We never had a complaint or a hitch. Then I got a new boss. An American general took over the job. Now we must never command the French to do anything. So he asks them to drop into his office if they have a moment to spare. They come in and he asks them very gently, would they please do this and so. They say, 'Of course, General. *Vive l'Amérique.*' Then the Fascist bastards go outside and screw us. Now everything is all balled up. Snafu."

That American officer knew only of what the Fascist officials we supported were doing in his own branch of army work. But wherever I went I found new evidences of Vichy obstructionism. Since we did have the real power in North Africa, it was difficult for those officials to accomplish any major sabotage of the Allied war effort. What I found most often were delays and petty irritations that plainly showed the pro-Axis bias behind them.

In Casablanca, a United States Government bureau

contracted with one of the local printers to turn out thousands of paper American flags. Vichy authorities forbade it and threatened the printer with jail if he complied with the request. When Jay Allen, who was then in charge of American propaganda in Morocco, complained, he was told that the Vichyites had stopped the printing of the flags because they were "unnecessary." It took a vigorous, formal démarche by the United States Government to obtain the flags. They were finally issued with the Vichy censor's stamp on the lowest stripe.

Collingwood and I found that our broadcasts differed greatly in technical quality on different days and different times of day. After a couple of weeks, the Army Signal Corps had stepped in to help us and we had begun broadcasting from Allied Force headquarters itself. The microphone was set up in the bedroom of Captain Charles Kibling, a crack American radio engineer, who worked night and day to keep us on the air. His enthusiasm for broadcasting, his cheerful personality and talent for negotiation helped us news broadcasters immeasurably in our relations with the authorities at headquarters. Others like Major Page, a well-known radio consulting engineer, and Major Henn-Collins of the British Army interested themselves in our work, but it was Kibling who fought our battles from the time he got up until he flopped into his bed beside the dials of his apparatus at three or four in the morning.

Now the Signal Corps could have taken over the French transmitter. With a few days' work by army engineers, it could have been put in, if not first-class, at least workable condition. Under the co-operation agreement with Darlan, we could not take over the transmitter. It must be run entirely by the French. A Signal Corps officer stayed constantly at the transmitter to protect it against possible sabotage, but he could only advise and request—not command—the French engineers.

When our broadcasts began to come out clearly at one sitting and very badly a few hours later, when inexplicable accidents began to happen that kept us off the air entirely, we began to investigate.

The French engineers worked in shifts. On one shift were a couple of engineers who were very pro-Ally. While they

were on duty the broadcasts came through clear and firm. If a break occurred in the transmitter they hunted it up quickly and worked speedily until it was repaired.

On one of the other shifts were French engineers who were pro-Vichy. While they were on duty, the frequency would shift, tubes would blow out, repairs would take many hours. In some of our broadcasts a strange, quavering quality manifested itself.

American radio engineer experts listened to it in our bedroom studio.

"Technically," they said, "there can be just one cause of that sound. Somewhere in the corner of that transmitter, some French engineer who evidently doesn't like American broadcasters is sitting in front of a dial. He's twiddling the dial back and forth on purpose to destroy the quality of the broadcast. That's the only explanation possible."

Nothing much could be done. Even if he were caught in the act, our pet saboteur would make some sort of explanation. We could not dismiss him or even threaten him. So from time to time American listeners must have thought the transatlantic atmospherics were wrecking the quality of our broadcasts when the blame should have been placed on that Vichy sympathizer twiddling his dial in our transmitter.

Darlan was very cocky about his censorship. Pictures of Pétain continued to disfigure walls and all public offices. De Gaullist patriots had on the first night smashed the headquarters of the Vichy Legion, an organization of militantly pro-Axis strong-arm men, but signs and slogans continued to assure the North Africans that the Legion formed France's only hope of salvation. By persuasion, Allied political warfare experts managed to get a certain number of articles into the local papers explaining the Allied views on the war. But the same censors who had eliminated everything unfavourable to the Axis continued in office. They had been chosen for their pro-Axis leanings. Now they watched carefully for signs that French reporters or editorial writers were becoming too enthusiastically pro-Ally.

Darlan said to an American official: "I have four hundred censors who control Press, radio, telegraphs, tele-

phones and the mail. I can manage them for you. But if we disagreed and I resigned, I would take my four hundred censors with me and what could you do? You couldn't replace them. So your military secrets would be secrets no longer. All security censorship would become chaos. But you need have no fear. I have no intention of resigning."

Time and again I tried to give some indication that all was not well in North Africa. Each time censorship stopped me. At last, after more than two weeks of effort, I succeeded in broadcasting the first hint of conditions that existed. The break came through persistence and the fact that what I was trying to say was common knowledge in North Africa, although so far no correspondent had broken through the hermetical seal of censorship that separated North Africa from the rest of the world.

In my morning broadcast of December 3rd, I said that a newly published decree made it clear that the arrangement between Admiral Darlan and the American authorities had gone beyond the military arrangement that was first envisaged.

"Darlan announces he is assuming the prerogatives of a Chief of State," I continued. "He is at the same time Commander-in-Chief of the Army, the Navy and the Air Force and representative of political power. He takes over control of the French Government's legal powers in North Africa.

"To observers here it seems important that the American public should realize that our representatives are apparently backing Darlan when he announces he is the depository of French sovereignty. In other words, we are tacitly saying that Darlan represents France.

"To-day's Algerian papers all publish several pictures of Darlan at yesterday's Allied ceremony in Algiers. He is shown between General Eisenhower and Admiral Cunningham. He is shown saluting. He is shown with French generals.

"To-day's proclamation makes it clear that Darlan will continue to control Press and censorship here. The local papers never did mention President Roosevelt's comments on the Darlan arrangement. And Mr Churchill's

references the other day to Vichy and General de Gaulle never appeared here.

"As far as is apparent on the surface, the American occupation made hardly a ripple in the control of civil and military affairs in North Africa. The same people that ran the show for Vichy are still flourishing."

Here the censor stepped in. I tried to say that many French men and women were puzzled at this. The censor changed it to read: "This still seems puzzling to many people of various nationalities."

Then I concluded: "The latest Frenchman to jump on the band-wagon is Marcel Peyrouton. Monsieur Peyrouton was a Vichy minister at one time. He was tireless in his activities against those who favoured an Allied victory. About the most favourable thing that can be checked up to his credit is that Laval didn't like him. When Laval came in, Peyrouton got out to South America. To-day the High Commissariat for North Africa announces that Monsieur Peyrouton has put himself at the disposition of Admiral Darlan."

This report that Darlan had publicly announced himself as Chief of State in North Africa was the first hint of the African political trend to reach the outside world. Up to now the authorities had managed to keep it secret within North Africa.

My broadcast had immediate repercussions. The B.B.C. picked it up and put it out on all their services. The *London Times* reprinted it in full. From Washington angry cables smacked into desks at Allied Force headquarters. To London from America came official reproaches that the Foreign Office should have permitted the semi-official B.B.C. to reproduce the broadcasts of "irresponsible American commentators" in North Africa.

The sub-editors on the newsdesk at the B.B.C. had for years been reading the scripts of the broadcasts I had done for N.B.C. from London. They knew I called my shots as I saw them. They knew that in my broadcasts to America I had frequently criticized the British Government and British political personalities when I felt they deserved it. So when my broadcast from North Africa hit the air, the B.B.C. knew it was as near the truth as I could discover. I

can well imagine the official scolding the chief news editor must have received ; and what he said about it afterwards.

At Allied Force headquarters an angry general, smarting under Washington's complaints that added to his military worries, explained that Darlan's decree published on the front page under big headlines in all Algerian papers must have been a ghastly mistake. The Americans had not understood he was taking on such sweeping powers.

But neither then nor at any other time was my report ever publicly denied. The cat had begun to scratch its way out of the bag.

Most of the reporters who had the background of European experience that fitted them to deal with North African politics, men like Stoneman, Middleton, Philip Jordan of the *London News Chronicle* and Evelyn Montague of the *Manchester Guardian*, had gone off to the front.

We radio-men had, for the time being, to stay at Headquarters, the only point from which we could broadcast regularly. So through the weeks of fall and early winter, Collingwood and I were about the only reporters who hunted out and explained the developments in the North African political scene. We felt that those developments were important and must be told.

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CHAPTER V

HEADS OR TAILS?

FROM the very beginning, war and politics were inextricably mingled in North Africa. This irritated the generals. But it was nevertheless true.

If, in October, before the convoys started, the military planners of the operation had been given an exact account of how much resistance they would meet on landing, the campaign would have finished in November instead of the following May.

But American diplomatic agents in North Africa had not made sufficiently thorough arrangements to be able to tell the military leaders ahead of time to what extent the French would resist or co-operate. Eisenhower and his staff had to prepare for a leap into the unknown.

Two contingencies had to be prepared for in those warm August days in London, while the planners "ate and slept North Africa" and the eyes of the rest of the world were caught by the daring raid across the Channel to Dieppe.

There might be no fighting and full co-operation from the French. In that case transport vessels and trucks could hurry at once to Tunis and Bizerta. North Africa would be ours and the next step would be to consolidate against possible German attack and prepare to stab Rommel in the back as he retreated through Libya to Tripolitania.

Secondly, the planners must prepare for the more likely possibility of stiff resistance from the French. In this case a preponderance of combat troops was most essential. The campaign would be a battle for bases, followed by a slow advance along the coast towards Tunisia with the French fighting against us all the way.

For each of these contingencies, special types of troops must be sent to Africa, special plans must be made and special supplies would be required.

For instance, if the French were going to fight a real campaign against us, we should need extensive medical

supplies, mobile hospitals to care for the wounded. All the first troops ashore would have to be assault troops. Transport would have to be provided to enable the troops to move inland.

Actually the landing forces were faced with a third and perhaps the worst contingency: a minor action on landing, a fast advance of five hundred miles into Tunisia and a pitched battle at the end of the advance.

The task of the military chiefs was difficult in those late summer days and nights. How many ships would the U-boats sink before they reached port? How then should units, their armaments and supplies be distributed? Enemy bombers might blow up our dumps of munitions and supplies as soon as we established them. What convoys might have to be recalled or delayed because of bad weather? How could a balance be struck between combat troops and the necessary supporting troops? Where should the convoys be directed, to four ports in Algeria or only one? At Dieppe, the British and Canadians were gaining some practical experience in moving hundreds of little boats, fighting a hard battle under air cover at the end of short lines of communication. For North Africa different problems arose. Convoys of big ships would be far away from the nearest friendly land-based aircraft. The ocean communications would stretch for thousands of miles.

At last the arrangements were decided and with a fervent hope for the best, the military chiefs saw that everything was ready, then prepared themselves to move to the Mediterranean with the forces.

The convoys were lucky. Of all the vessels in that first big thrust, only one was torpedoed. The torpedo blew off part of its stern one hundred and eighty miles from Algiers. The troops climbed into their little assault craft and arrived in Algiers on the Monday when the fighting was all over. The vessel limped on to an Algerian beach, was repaired, and I saw it floating not many weeks ago.

Motor transport proved the greatest difficulty. Each truck, jeep, tank or armoured car loaded on to a boat displaces several men and their supplies. The first units were loaded on an assault scale for immediate hard fighting. They had only twelve vehicles for each battalion and they

were ready to battle on a self-sufficient scale for forty-eight hours and move something like forty miles inland.

At Casablanca, Oran, Algiers and later at Bone, many vehicles were needed to clear the wharfs as the great ships unloaded their supplies. When the fighting units began their long race eastwards they needed many more vehicles than they brought with them.

Since the Axis had taken most of the oil and petrol in North Africa, French cars and trucks had been for the most part laid up in garages for a couple of years. Others had been ruined by running them on alcohol or coal-gas.

The British, who had formed more than a third of the initial assault and now made up nearly nine-tenths of the original thrust into Tunisia, requisitioned a good deal of transport. Much of it turned out to be useless. The combat troops took the bulk of the Allied Army transport that was to have been used in port clearance.

This meant that the unloading of ships slowed up. Not as many supplies as had been expected could be put ashore. Yet at least 3,000 to 3,500 tons of material had to be cleared every day to keep the move into Tunisia going. Huge supply bases had to be erected from Algiers all the way up to Tunisia.

A trickle of supplies began moving up the roads. By the latter part of April the trickle had turned into a flood of more than 17,000 tons a week for the British First Army alone, not counting the American Second Corps, the Royal Air Force and the American Air Forces.

The British and American forces freely used and exchanged what they could use of each other's supplies. Food, transport and petrol were used by either army as needed and as available.

Once the Allied forces landed in North Africa, the Germans acted quickly. Admiral Esteva, dominated by Vichy's blind self-crucifixion ideology, prepared the way for a German entry. French troops were moved out of Tunis and the city was left defenceless. Orders went out to oppose any Allied landing, but to allow the Germans and Italians to enter the country. At least one Tunisian army commander, however, left his heavy equipment behind and in his fear lest he should be ordered to fight for the Germans hurried

his troops into western Tunisia, where they later joined the Allied Forces.

Within a couple of days of our landing, the first German troop carriers had appeared over Alouina airfield just outside Tunis. French Air Force officers watched them circle and land without lifting a finger to stop them.

Meanwhile General Anderson had taken the daring gamble of shooting a combat force into Tunisia along lines of communication that the Allies did not control. If the French forces in eastern Algeria and Tunisia turned out to be enemies, the whole Allied combat force might be trapped up in the mountains and its line of communication cut.

For a few fateful days the issue was in doubt. Could we get our force to Tunis and Bizerta before the Germans could organize their communications and send strong reinforcements across the Sicilian straits to Africa? Rommel was being beaten back through Egypt and Libya. For the moment we had nothing to fear from him.

Here again, war depended on politics. If Esteva had immediately decided to help the Allies, if he had cared enough for France to take the risk, we could have won the campaign in November. Our spearhead reached a point about twelve miles from Tunis. If Esteva had ordered defence at all points against the Germans, Tunis would have been bombed. But the Germans could not then have landed troops against opposition. To get ready their forces for such an operation would have taken days and probably weeks. If Esteva could have delayed the Germans forty-eight hours longer, our advance forces would have been in Tunis. The great gamble would have been won. Instead, the Admiral listened to the words of the aged defeatist in Vichy. The Germans found airfields and dock facilities ready for their arrival. Their first weak forces could have been wiped out by the police of Tunis. For days, a company or two of determined French soldiers could have put the Axis arrivals on the defensive. When the Allied striking force arrived, it was just too late.

Handicapped by lack of transport, Allied commanders could put only a small combat unit into Tunisia. Many thousands of troops landed at the Algiers and Oran docks. They had to organize bases all over Algeria, and the staffing

of five or six hundred miles of communications swallowed up the bulk of the troops. Airfields had to be organized, supplied, guarded. Roads were quickly chewed to pieces by the tanks and many miles of roadway had to be repaired by army engineers. Bridges were strengthened. Roads must be policed.

A French railroad line ran from Algiers to Tunisia. Complaints from the fighting units about lack of ammunition arrived at base. Puzzled headquarters officers who had sent several carloads of ammunition searched out the reason for its non-arrival. They found it was the custom of the French engineers when pulling a long train to unhook several freight cars at the bottom of an upgrade. The ammunition cars were found forgotten in sidings at the bottoms of various Algerian mountains. It took at least two days and nights of creaking and puffing to get a train from Algiers into eastern Algeria. Up at the front where the lines were under air attack, American and British troops took over the running of the trains. The amateur train engineers had great sport dragging their loads about the local lines with one hand on the throttle and the other tootling merrily away on the whistle.

Food and fuel dumps and repair shops for army trucks had to be put into immediate operation. They all took thousands of personnel. When Phillippeville and Bone were occupied, we had two more harbours to organize. Bone was within easy bomber range, however, and the shipping we sent there suffered losses.

We headquarters reporters could say we had seen thousands of troops being landed. We could not, for reasons of military security, say that only a fraction of them could be used to fight.

I saw General Anderson, the commander of the First Army, on the afternoon of November 14th. His personality did not make the impact of an Eisenhower, an Alexander or a Montgomery, but he was rated an excellent commander. He said that the Germans had got some planes into Tunisia and from these airfields were bombing Bougie and Bone, our most advanced harbours. German Air Force units held only the port and airfield of both Bizerta and Tunis.

The Allied force that rushed into Tunisia consisted only

of the elements of two brigades of the British Seventy-eighth Infantry Division, and a very small armoured force; "blade force" it was called, made up of a battalion of the British 17th Lancers and some tank-destroyer, mobile guns from the American First Armoured Division.

This force was intended to strike at and hold Tunis and Bizerta if possible. It was realized that such a small force, only a few thousand men in all, could not hope to take the cities if the Germans succeeded in reinforcing their Tunisian bridgehead in any strength. Yet it was the largest force we could put on the fighting line at the end of those long communications.

Southern Tunisia was almost a no-man's-land. A couple of hundred Germans arrived in Gabes by troop-carrier plane and garrisoned the city. For some time the garrison of Sfax was a handful of Axis officers and men.

Colonel Raff led a detachment of American parachutists in a jump on to Youks-les-Bains airfield in eastern Algeria near Tebessa. Colonel Raff carried an American flag in his hand. The Americans did not have to fire a shot. They were welcomed by the French garrison.

A battalion was detached from the American First Infantry Division and put under Raff's command. The exploits of the American parachutists and the figure of Raff caught the public notice. The parachutists were tough and courageous. It was not their fault, but until February most of them had never fired a shot in anger. They were not opposed in their jumps.

In November a German motor-cycle patrol entered Gafsa, a key town in southern Tunisia. The infantry battalion under Raff's command attacked the town. There was some scattered firing and the Germans leaped on their motor-cycles and hastened away. Since Raff's name was always mentioned, most reporters assumed his parachutists were holding the whole front. Actually they formed a small minority of the total force, perhaps a hundred-odd parachutists to five or six hundred infantrymen.

Parachutists, like Rangers and Commandos, are meant for a few hours of intensive fighting alternating with long spells of rest and preparation. Yet in the south the American parachutists and in the north British Commandos were

forced to undergo a long period of campaigning because no other troops were available to relieve them. The Commandos had some heavy losses. The parachutists were gradually withdrawn. One group dropped behind the enemy lines, but in the dark they got turned around, walked the wrong way and in broad daylight marched down the main Tunisian coast road into the hands of the German garrison of a town they should not have been near. All except one or two were taken prisoner. Raff stayed around Gafsa for a while after all his parachutists had been withdrawn to the rear. Then he too was recalled.

The task of these few hundred American troops in the south was to make the Germans believe they were a whole division. They rushed up and down their hundred-mile front, appearing here and there to threaten the Germans on the coast. It was hard, tearing work with fighting every now and then, but the job was well done. If we did nothing important in the area for several months, neither did the Germans and Italians.

Our main thrust was in the north. From the very beginning we knew that, once we could get Tunis and Bizerta, all Tunisia was ours. The spearhead thrust onward, Medjez-el-Bab, Mateur, Tebourba, even as far as Djedeida. When we at headquarters learned our tiny force was in Djedeida, only twelve or fourteen miles from Tunis, it seemed for a day or two as though the great gamble might succeed.

But within a little over a week from the date of our landing the Germans had landed tanks in Tunisia. Thirty tanks met our advancing spearhead. Eight were destroyed, but the Allies lost anti-tank guns and some twenty-five-pounder fieldpieces they could not easily spare.

In Tunis, Frenchmen heard the thunder of our cannon fire. They began to rejoice. Deliverance was at hand. Then the thunder of the Allied guns died down. Only by listening intently could the people of Tunis hear the sound. It died away entirely. They were not to hear the sound again until the Allies took Tunis.

Before the end of November, headquarters was estimating the German forces at twenty thousand plus three or four thousand Italians. Our tiny spearhead was outnumbered.

It was towards the end of November that we got into Djedeida. That was too late. The Germans struck with a powerful counter-attack. Dive-bombers, artillery and tanks were thrown at our spearhead. Parachutists dropped behind our force. A flank attack threatened the existence of our most forward troops.

Slowly, reluctantly, the little Allied force returned. Tunis had been within sight. Back to Tebourba they went fighting by day and night. The Axis had local command of the air and punished our force severely. Both the Allied air forces were bombing Tunis and Bizerta. In the north, British parachutists had dropped to take over advance airfields like Souk-el-Arba.

Now another factor had entered the battle of Tunisia—bad weather. Its results were to be both good and bad.

The weather towards the end of November is usually very rainy in Tunisia. If our invasion attempt had been made two or three weeks earlier, we might possibly have made sufficient use of dry roads and airfields to have taken Tunis and Bizerta before the rains set in. As it was, our newly captured airfields turned into sticky morasses. Planes could not take off or land. Tanks, guns and trucks got bogged down whenever they tried to leave macadam roadways, and macadam roadways are few in Tunisia.

Our forward troops were blasted out of Tebourba. By early December it had become plain to headquarters reporters that the gamble had been lost. Now, could we hold? The Germans flung an attack at Medjez-el-Bab. Medjez was the key to all our positions in Tunisia. Lose Medjez and our positions were outflanked. Lose Medjez and we might be driven entirely out of Tunisia.

If the weather hindered us from achieving our original objective, the weather now began to help us. Our combat force was running short of supplies and ammunition. If the battle kept up its intensive pace, we could not supply it. The advance force would be doomed. But the weather became so bad that neither side could put in a serious attack. The fighting died down to patrols and skirmishes. Supply lines were strengthened and materials began to move up faster towards the front. The danger had passed.

Reporters who were with that Anglo-American advance

force will describe its full history. There cannot have been many instances in modern military history in which units fought longer and harder under more trying conditions. Men of that force were in the front line for six whole months without even a day or two's rest. Units like the Hampshire Regiment and the Derbyshire Yeomanry, to mention only two, won fame that extended through both the British and American Armies. Nor were the men of Combat Command B detailed to the force from the American First Armoured Division slow to demonstrate their fighting qualities.

As the strategy developed before headquarters correspondents, we realized that this small force must hold long enough for the Allies to build up behind it a large force and the lines of communication to supply such a force.

A hundred-mile front held by a few thousand men, that was what developed. Companies and platoons must hold areas over which a division or two should have been spread. The hard protective crust formed by this little combat force was thin. If the Germans broke through, they could mangle all our communications and force us to carry on our work of organization far back in Algeria. But try as they might, the Germans could not break through.

Meanwhile the Germans were trying to interrupt our supplies at the points where they must be concentrated first, Algiers and the other Algerian ports.

Daylight raiding was too expensive. The first Axis bomber units that came over were shot to bits by Allied fighters and only a small percentage ever got away. The Germans turned to night raids against Algiers.

I honestly do not know how many hundred bombing raids I have been in. I was in France, then lived and worked in every one of the London blitzes. I was in raids at Dover. I was bombed all day at Dieppe. Add various other raids in England to raids in Algiers and at the Tunisian front and the figure must be as high as most people in the Army or out of it have experienced in this war.

One raid is very much like another. Anti-aircraft goes into action. You hear the drone of approaching bombers, the whistling tear of the bombs. Houses are blasted. Fires spring up. People are killed. If there are many planes and many bombs you get scared. Although you may joke a bit

and try not to show it—simply because fear is infectious—you remain scared until it is all over. At times you may get a certain detached amusement, if you have that kind of mentality, at the spectacle of yourself throwing yourself on to the floor or into a foxhole whenever you hear a bomb drop. You can accustom yourself to work during raids and if there are enough people around and the talk is loud enough, you can almost forget the raid. With long experience you develop a certain amount of fatalism and after certain elementary precautions, such as getting down low if you're in the open or staying away from windows if you're indoors, you reach the stage of thinking: "If it's going to hit me it's going to hit me, and if it isn't it isn't, no matter where I go." But you can never entirely disregard a raid, no matter how small. Those of us who were in London during the big April 16th and May 10th raids in 1941 realize that R.A.F. raids twice as heavy on German cities of far smaller area than London must really be the nearest approach to hell on earth. And we who saw London in flames await with interest the time when those raids will be three and four and five times the power of London's, to see how the Germans will stand that hell whose doors they wilfully and purposefully opened on helpless Warsaw, Rotterdam and the rest of the world.

Algiers is not large in size and I don't think I have ever heard and seen such concentrated anti-aircraft fire. Heavy anti-aircraft, Bofors, Oerlikons, machine-guns, everything that would fire a bullet, seemed to take part in the barrage of fire that was raised over the city and harbour. As the German planes ran over the harbour, the air blazed with the coloured tracers, the flashes from the gun-positions, and the explosions of the shells. Up in their villa on the heights overlooking the city and out of the main target area, photographers got some impressive pictures of the barrage. But photo plates and films could not record the awful splendour of those fountains of flak. The din was so great that you could not hear the bombs falling. This became slightly irritating and added to your anxiety. On one occasion a bomb struck a building not more than fifty yards from our room in the "Aletti."

The first warning we had of the bomb's arrival was when

the blast, which luckily for us came from around a corner, blew one officer who was standing upright across the room on to the bed and choking fine dust filled the hotel corridors. In the building that was hit, five civilians were killed and fifteen wounded.

The Allies protected their base well. The Germans never sent over more than twenty or thirty bombers at the most and they invariably lost heavily. Algiers began to get quite a reputation with the Luftwaffe and captured German pilots disclosed that the bombing run from inland down over the city and harbour had gained names like "Suicide Passage" among German fliers who saw the few aircraft that returned riddled with bullet and shell-holes.

During one of these raids I was standing on a balcony overlooking the harbour. On the next balcony stood several men. One leaned over and in a strong French accent said: "You are correspondents, aren't you. Will you take a drink with me?"

We agreed for the sake of politeness to the unknown Frenchman. We chattered back and forth for a time as we watched the anti-aircraft fire across the harbour.

The man who had struck up the original conversation came over to our balcony. He began asking us questions about ourselves and our work. He told me his wife came from my own state, Maine. He said, "My name is Bedaux."

I asked if he were any relation to Charles Bedaux, the man whose "speed-up" system for industry had caused him to be disliked by factory workers in America and Europe.

"I am Charles Bedaux," the man said. Now it was my turn to be curious. For a long time Bedaux had been a mysterious figure in Europe. Although a Frenchman, he had obtained American citizenship. During America's neutrality he travelled about Europe.

I had heard that in each country his contacts were often in the more shadowy circles of big business and government. As an American, while we were neutral, he could, of course, visit Germany. In Vichy he was in close contact with Laval. What was the purpose of his being in North Africa at this particular time?

"I am carrying out an industrial mission for the Vichy Government," Bedaux explained. "A big communications

plan in Morocco. I was caught here by the invasion of our American troops."

He did not seem happy at the arrival of "our American troops." "All my plans are now upset," he said. "Naturally, I am going to see Admiral Darlan and the American authorities about the possibility of carrying through the scheme anyway."

Bedaux introduced me to his son. Unlike his father, the young man talked with an American accent. His appearance and mannerisms were French and he used American slang consciously and too often, like an English actor trying to represent an American on the London stage. I wondered where the boy had been brought up.

Bedaux had seemed over-interested in us from the beginning. His voice dripped with cordiality, but no one who saw those hard, shifting eyes behind the heavy spectacles would have trusted him on sight.

Next night I was in the hotel corridor with Percy Winner, Edmond Taylor and one or two others from the American Political Warfare section. A raid was on. We bumped into Bedaux. Nothing would do him but we must come with him to watch it from his front balcony. I tipped off the political warriors as to who he was and we went out on the balcony.

We had not been standing there for more than five minutes when the door suddenly opened and a British lieutenant, hand on his pistol, followed by two men with ready rifles, joined us.

"Who are you?" I told him. Then he said: "Last night during the raid my men reported they saw light-signals coming from this window."

Bedaux immediately broke in with: "But this American war correspondent was with me in this room last evening during the raid. He knows everything was all right."

"I was on the next balcony talking to Monsieur Bedaux for only about twenty minutes," I sidestepped. "I did not come in this room or know what went on here."

After some more questioning, the lieutenant left us. Bedaux explained that it must have been the frequent opening and shutting of the door to the lighted corridor that had caused the light flashes. He may have been right.

A few days later I learned from what reporters like to call an "unimpeachable source" that Bedaux would not be with us any more. He had just been arrested as a German agent by the French Army's Deuxième Bureau. It appeared that the French Intelligence had been following his career with great industry and the closest interest. My informant told me that enough evidence had been compiled to order Bedaux's immediate execution, but Bedaux was an American citizen and there had been some discussion between the Americans and French about his future fate. It was pointed out that Bedaux had powerful friends, both in America and abroad, and that his execution as a spy might have unfortunate repercussions.

I tried to broadcast the story. The censors stopped it. After submitting the story every day for ten days, I brought it up at an open conference with a high American authority. He said that not all the evidence had been collected and it was thought better not to break the story just yet. Other reporters then tried to write the story, but could not get it passed.

I left the story with the censors, requesting that when the ban on the news was lifted they should inform me. Weeks later, Washington officials announced that Bedaux had been arrested. Later on other things seemed more important and I never learned whether Bedaux had or had not stood in front of a firing squad.

With Kenneth Downs, Merrill Mueller, and several other correspondents, I had spent a night during the flight to Bordeaux on the grounds of Bedaux's magnificent Château de Cande just outside Tours. It would be a long way, I thought, from the Château de Cande to a firing squad.

In the early days the "Aletti" had other strange denizens. In the lift I bumped into the tall, baldish figure of Pierre-Étienne Flandin, a former French premier. He too was a shifty actor on the international scene. His telegram of congratulation to Hitler after Munich had brought him some unwelcome publicity in France. Flandin it was who on the eve of the French Army's mobilization had had pasted up all over Paris posters urging Frenchmen not to fight but to resist mobilization. His political influence had saved him from being shot or even imprisoned.

Now Flandin had crawled out from under some stone and appeared in the "Aletti" lift. I wondered what he was doing in North Africa. Later he disappeared from Algiers to stay at his country estate in eastern Algeria.

Like most reporters, I would have preferred to go at once to the front. But since N.B.C. forbade me to go unless I could broadcast regularly and since headquarters was the only point from which I could do this, I had to be content with staying at headquarters.

After a time I found headquarters a place of absorbing interest. Some reporters had gone to the front. Communications were so bad that their dispatches only reached headquarters for transmission to New York or London days or even weeks after they had been written. The reporter at the front got his eye-witness picture of the fighting. We at headquarters got the news first and were able to put it out quickly.

In the first few days of confusion, the only public relations officer who showed a sense of his job was Major McIntosh, a Britisher. He requisitioned rooms for his correspondents, arranged for them to get food. Then he hunted up transportation. Nobody knew where or how reports from the front would come in, but McIntosh worked on the problem of communications with the front. Finally he made himself known at British First Army headquarters and arranged for all reporters in Algiers to get a regular précis of the official army reports that were coming from units at the front.

Later Anglo-American public relations became fairly well organized, so that obtaining ordinary news and facilities involved less leg-work and, incidentally, less brain-work. Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph Phillips of the American Army was headquarters P.R.O. A former foreign correspondent himself, he was well liked by headquarters reporters. His assistant at the beginning was Major, later Lieutenant-Colonel Kenneth Clark. He was an old newspaperman. Once when the army hour put out over N.B.C.'s networks demanded what we thought was a full hour's broadcast from North Africa and gave us only two days to arrange it, Clark worked like a trojan to have the programme ready on time.

The programme involved about fifty people and a mad scramble to put the whole hour of unrehearsed material on the air during an air raid. Everything clicked perfectly. The timing, done by my erratic Ingersoll wrist-watch, was right to the second. None of the thousand things that might have gone wrong did go wrong. When it was over, the engineers, Donovan of the B.B.C. and Captain Kibling of the Signal Corps who had formerly been a crack New York radio engineer, came up and congratulated me.

Kibling said: "I've heard some good programmes in my day, but I'm sure that's the best broadcast I ever helped put on the air."

Later we learned it was never received in New York. N.B.C. and army engineers had not been able to find it because for some technical reason it had gone out on a different frequency from that ordinarily used by the Algiers transmitter.

One person did hear the programme. The pilot of a British Spitfire came up to Wing-Commander Tommy Wisdom, chief of R.A.F. public relations.

"That was a fine radio programme you took part in last night," he said. "I was up in my plane and happened to tune in on it. When I landed, I listened right through to the end. It was a grand show."

After all that work, I never had the heart to tell the fifty-odd people who took part that their total audience that night was one Spitfire pilot. Next day one of the local French papers came out with a full-page description of the programme "broadcast from Algiers and heard by millions of Americans yesterday."

The most justly popular officer among the headquarters war correspondents, American and British alike, was Colonel J. V. McCormack, O.B.E., M.C. For more than thirty years he had been in the British Army. He had won his Military Cross for gallantry in the first world war. The Order of the British Empire and his promotion to full colonel with the red tabs and cap-band of a staff officer, came to him in North Africa. No promotion was ever greeted with more genuine enthusiasm by a mixed roomful of correspondents than the day we presented him with a bouquet of flowers on his first appearance in his new rank

and Virgil Pinkley of the United Press made a speech of congratulation that mixed humour and sincerity.

McCormack was certainly the shortest and perhaps the wittiest officer in the British Army. It was he who transmitted and explained headquarters' reports on the campaign to the correspondents at his twice-daily conferences. His knowledge of military affairs was thorough, for fighting had been his lifelong business. When one or two of the more temperamental reporters at the front, irked by the fact that McCormack's conferences usually produced the news twenty-four hours ahead of their own stories, complained that the colonel had never seen one particular section of the front, a headquarters correspondent felt called on to remark that an officer of thirty years' experience might well be able to read a map and judge topography without being put to the necessity of viewing it through field-glasses.

Day after day the colonel gave us the news from the front and weighed it up in the light of his own experience. It was largely due to him that our reports were well informed and rarely fell into the pitfalls of undue optimism or extreme pessimism.

McCormack could talk to other professional army officers in their own language. He fought for rights and privileges for the correspondents and formed an invaluable link between them and the army organization. The faithful Watson to Colonel McCormack's Holmes was Major Flood. They had been together since France and they formed together a pair of British officers determined to get the best of everything for the correspondents accredited to the First Army, whether they were British or American.

To space out and give vitality to the straight military news, I could at headquarters meet American pilots just back from bombing Tunis or Bizerta, American and British soldiers who had perhaps been wounded as they manned mobile, tank-destroyer artillery or their Vickers machine-guns. Observers of one kind or another were continually passing back and forth from headquarters to the front. I interviewed them on the air, or in my broadcasts tried to give an idea of how they lived and fought to people at home.

I tried to tell of the mud, the rain and the snow on the bare Tunisian mountains. I tried to tell my listeners of the

strange life these men were leading, lacking all the comforts, living always in the shadow of danger.

In one such broadcast I said: "Most of them never knew what war was all about until they hit Africa. But they know now—what nobody EVER knows until that bomb or that shell starts coming at you and you suddenly realize that someone is really trying to kill you—that war isn't something in a book or a picture, but—friends of yours getting battered to pieces a few yards away from you.

"War is kids writing home to Manchester or Philadelphia, writing: 'Dear Mum, I am feeling fine,' after they have been pounded by shells or dive-bombers for hours. War is a bunch of American boys behind a big gun whanging away at German tanks like you whang at the ducks in a shooting gallery. And war is the two young British navy sub-lieutenants I saw the other day buying a whole armful of carnations from an Arab flower-seller and cramming them into the arms of a French girl who smiled at them.

"Anyway that is war in North Africa to-night, and I thought you might like to hear about it. The thing that strikes an observer who has knocked around Europe a few years, right in the eye, is that these American boys who have gone out to Tunisia to fight are the same ordinary boys you used to see on Congress Street or Main Street, fellows who are still interested in *Superman*, and Lana Turner and who'll win the Rose Bowl game—if they are still playing the Rose Bowl game."

On late November, the French Fleet scuttled itself in Toulon Harbour. Reports of how thorough the scuttling had been varied, but one or two small warships managed to make their way to North Africa. Darlan, angered at the loss of his fleet, issued a statement blasting the Germans. The tone of the statement left no doubt that now, at any rate, he had become a convinced enemy of the Germans.

By December the front had become comparatively static. Both armies had settled down on the general lines they were to occupy for the remainder of the campaign. Behind the lines you saw new evidence every day of the furious effort to move up and equip and supply an army that when the weather cleared should be able to strike the Germans a crushing blow.

Meanwhile through the early weeks of December it became apparent that the political situation in North Africa was reaching a new tension.

I tried to tell it. Some of it I could and some I could not tell.

The pro-Axis Vichy Legion controlled food distribution. It was one of the perquisites Vichy had given them. Although we had gone through the formality of arresting one or two of the chief officers of the Legion, Darlan had made no move to break up the organization. On the first day of December the usual announcement of the month's rations of oil, grain, coffee, milk and soap was not made. French housewives told me that the Legionnaires were whispering in the market places: "We can't tell what food you'll get this month. The Americans and the British have taken everything. It would have been better if they'd never come."

That our troops had taken any of the French food stores was, of course, a lie. It suited the Legion that the people should believe it.

Some young Frenchmen one day came to me with a naïve question.

"Shall we try to tell the outside world that the majority of us don't want to die for Darlan?" they asked. "Or would that be embarrassing for you Americans and the United Nations' war effort?"

In another broadcast written in the middle of December I explained that representatives of the Office of War Information were doing fine work making available to the population information they hadn't had for more than two years.

I told of one intelligent, well-to-do Frenchman who had asked me what the "Lend-Lease law" was and said he'd like to read it. I explained that Vichy and Axis defeatist propaganda had had its effect and couldn't be changed overnight.

In the same broadcast, I noted that while the name of de Gaulle aroused enthusiasm either for or against him and the name of Pétain still exercised some influence in the official and upper classes, the name of neither Darlan nor Giraud seemed to arouse any spark.

I said: "General Giraud seems to be admired, but he

hasn't figured long enough in the minds of these people of North Africa to strike a vital chord.

"You can argue logically that Darlan is a military necessity. You can also argue logically that if every present leader were swept away to-morrow, the mass of the people of these territories would still work for us. But then, the common people of most of the world are for us. It depends on whether you can trust them and whether they can do anything without leaders.

"We haven't yet brought all four freedoms to North Africa. If you were to go out and shout '*Vive Roosevelt*' or scratch '*Vive de Gaulle*' on a wall, you'd be asking for trouble. The other day one of the daily papers was not allowed to appear. It was entirely censored because a high official—Governor Chatel—spotted in it an open letter to President Roosevelt that had been passed by both Allied and French censors.

"The letter welcomed the Allies, but suggested in one sentence that some changes might be needed. The letter didn't specify the changes."

The entire broadcast was slashed out by Allied political censorship with exactly three strokes of a broad blue pencil—after it had been passed for military security.

But while the tightened political censorship could keep news of the real feeling inside North Africa from getting to the American and British public, it could not keep the internal tension from reaching the snapping point. Too many conflicting pressures were at work. We reporters felt that something drastic would have to happen or the whole situation would explode. I know that some of the American officials in North Africa felt the same way. I suppose they must have filed reports, but whether they ever reached Washington, or were heeded if they did, I don't know.

One day something did happen.

CHAPTER VI

DEATH OF AN ADMIRAL

IT was the day before Christmas in Algiers. About three o'clock in the afternoon, an automobile carrying four men stopped in the Rue Michelet where it winds up the hill past the Palais d'Été, the Summer Palace. A young man of twenty named Bonnier de la Chapelle got out. He saw the car move up the street and park, then he turned and entered the Palais d'Été. The two native Spahi sentries in their colourful uniforms did not pay him much attention. The attendant at the desk inside knew Chapelle had applied several times for an appointment with Admiral Darlan. It had at last been granted.

The Admiral had not yet returned from his luncheon conference, so Chapelle was shown into an anteroom just off the corridor leading to Darlan's office.

Just before three-thirty, Darlan's car drew up outside the entrance. Darlan, followed by one of his aides-de-camp, Commandant Hourcade, briskly entered the building, and walked towards his office.

Chapelle, in one of his unsuccessful attempts to see the Admiral, had visited the building that same morning. He knew the best place to meet the Admiral as he entered his office.

Now he was ready. As Darlan neared the door of the office, Chapelle stepped out, raised a pistol and fired once, twice at point-blank range. The first hit Darlan in the face, the second pierced his lungs. The Admiral fell heavily across the threshold of his office. Chapelle sprang over him looking for a means of escape through the window. Commandant Hourcade pounded up and Chapelle fired twice more. The second shot brought Hourcade down with a bullet in the leg.

But the first shot at Darlan had roused the whole building. Officers, officials and attendants rushed in and seized Chapelle before he could get away. Nobody noticed a car

parked up the street with engine running, start up and move away.

One of Darlan's assistants, Rear-Admiral Battet, ordered that Darlan be taken to the hospital. He died within less than an hour, before he could be operated upon and without regaining consciousness.

So came the violent end of Admiral of the Fleet Darlan, Pétain's heir-apparent. While it looked as though the Germans would win the war, Darlan was the open enemy of the Allies. When the success of the Allied invasion of North Africa convinced him the Allies were likely to win, Darlan joined us. The loss of what was perhaps the only thing dear to his heart, the French Fleet, sealed him in his resolve to work against the Germans.

Perhaps the best thing that can be said about the long career of Darlan is that in the six weeks he worked with us, he never double-crossed us or in any way failed to fulfil what he promised us.

I saw Darlan several times at public functions, but only once met him to talk to. He looked very much like the cartoons that Low used to draw of him. Baldish, with white close-clipped hair, his appearance was benign and grandfatherly until you noticed that his eyes were as keen as the eyes of a hawk.

His career in the French Navy was a well-managed, political one. The strings of power came from the Naval Ministry in Paris and Darlan managed to stay close to the centre of power.

In Algiers soon after my arrival I saw Fred Astaire's old film "Follow the Fleet." As the sailors sang the song about "Join the Navy and see the world," they came to the phrase about the Admiral who had "never been to sea." A ripple of shocked laughter ran through the French audience. They had applied the phrase in their own minds to Darlan.

In the complicated struggle for power in Vichy, Darlan managed to hold his own. His political sense stood him in good stead when he found himself in Algiers at the time the Americans and British arrived. With apparent ease, he managed to accomplish the tremendous political turn-about necessary for his appearance on the side of the Allies.

Working with the Americans and British, he needed only a hint from the Allied authorities to fulfil any of their military wishes. He held closely to complete internal control of North Africa, but externally he was ready and willing to do everything he could for them.

It was his misfortune that the memory of all the past years could not be sponged from men's minds. He could not mobilize public feeling behind us. The very fact that we had given him, the scorn of all French patriots, the highest position in our power had brought disillusionment and distrust into North Africa. But within his own limits for that six weeks, he did work with us.

The Allied authorities more than played fair with him. They tried to protect his reputation in return for his co-operation. When I met him in company with a score of reporters and officers, we were told that we could not ask him on-the-record questions.

The Admiral appeared in a brown civilian suit and a brown tie. He read us a prepared statement in French, which was translated by Colonel Phillips. In the statement, he renounced personal ambitions. I had written down some questions that I wanted to ask him about the explanation for his past enmity towards the Allies and his hatred of those Frenchmen who were trying to carry on France's part in the war against Germany. But I could not ask them.

After the statement was finished Darlan led us into another room for appetizers and wine. He was quite affable to the correspondents and freely condemned the German attempt to get control of his fleet.

Although it had been announced that nothing could be mentioned of the meeting except the prepared statement, the censorship some hours later relaxed to permit the reporting of any of the Admiral's off-record statements that the authorities considered harmless or that would put the Admiral in a favourable light abroad.

At one o'clock in the afternoon—eight a.m. in America—I had done my usual broadcast for N.B.C. I had spoken of the preparations for Christmas, the fact that the previous night British, French and American troops had attended the first dance in Algiers since the June, 1940, armistice, a dance sponsored by the American Red Cross.

By early afternoon I was tired. I had been working sixteen-hour days continuously since my arrival in North Africa. Seven days a week I had to find material and do my twice daily broadcasts. I rarely got to bed before one or two in the morning. So I lay down for a nap in my hotel room.

It was dark by the time I had woken up, taken a bath, and made my way to the British correspondents' mess in the Hotel Regina.

When I came into the room, Colonel McCormack said: "Have you heard that Darlan's been shot, John?"

I laughed at what I thought was some more of the colonel's Armagh wit. "Nothing trifling, I hope," I parried. "Killed instantly," said McCormack.

"How about Hitler and Mussolini, anyone got them too?" I answered. Suddenly I realized the colonel wasn't joking.

"What about getting out the news? When did it happen? What details have you got? Any stop on broadcasts?"

"Not a word allowed out until after the special conference to-night at ten-thirty," the colonel continued. "The French are still investigating it. Joe Phillips is keeping in touch with headquarters and the French authorities."

Twenty or thirty jittery reporters waited until the special conference. This was tremendous news and we got that keyed-up, nervous feeling of being in on it that is one of the sensations that a reporter never loses. Most of us had worked on big stories so long that we seldom had the feeling. The story had to be really big. This one was. Under the stress of that feeling the mind of a trained man works at far quicker than its usual speed. When it is over and the broadcast made or the story written and sent, comes the complete letdown of exhaustion.

I missed my dinner and started scouring Algiers for news from my French sources that would space out the report, in case the official account had gaps or tried to conceal anything.

I picked up the story much as it was told us later in the evening. The whole official life of the city was buzzing with it. So would the city as a whole when they heard of it next day.

By ten-thirty we were all collected at headquarters itself.

There we waited, half an hour, an hour. It was nearly midnight when a French official arrived to tell of the afternoon's events.

The censors had set up shop in an adjoining room and we pounded out the stories and rushed them in, sheet by sheet. Agency reporters had tried to influence the authorities to ban broadcasts until after their copy had reached New York and London. We could not, of course, agree. At that time of night the first news would come from the radio in any case, and unless Collingwood, Arthur Mann of Mutual who had just arrived on the scene, and I went on the air, our networks would be giving the news only on a par with the private radio stations unaffiliated with any network. We did, however, agree to give the agency men a slight head-start while the transmitter was being used to put out the short official French communiqué for anyone who might be listening.

By good luck I was the first to broadcast the news of the death of the Admiral. Collingwood, Mann and Dunnett of the B.B.C. were in the room with me ready to follow me in quick succession. Later I learned that even with the head-start, agency reports did not reach New York and London until some time after we had finished and millions of radio listeners in America knew the full story.

It was something like one-thirty in the morning in London. Repeated ringing of the bedside telephone woke my wife.

"This is the B.B.C. censor," came an excited voice over the wire. "Has the broadcast John MacVane has just made from Algiers been passed by censorship? Do you know whether there is any censorship stop on it?"

"What's that? What's that?" said my wife sleepily.

"Isn't this the office of the National Broadcasting Company?" asked the voice.

"No. This is Mr MacVane's home," she said, giving the N.B.C. office 'phone number. "What's it all about? What had happened?"

"It's important news. Can't tell you. Hear it on the B.B.C. eight o'clock broadcast in the morning" said the voice.

As my wife lay back in her bed, she wondered drowsily what could have happened to cause all the excitement. All

that excitement. The only thing that might have caused such a stir was if Darlan had been assassinated. That must be it. And she went to sleep.

Next morning she found her guess had been right.

The official communication on the killing was misleading. It said "Complete order reigns in Algiers notwithstanding general indignation caused by the event."

Of course there was complete order. The idea of the Algerian population rioting in indignation at the death of Darlan was ludicrous. If there was any indignation, no reporter ever saw evidence of it. Officials said the expected thing, but as for genuine indignation, not a sign.

The communiqué also mentioned the possibility that the assassination might be of German or Italian origin. This too seemed ludicrous. Whoever wrote the communiqué knew it was not true. We reporters knew that hundreds of Algerians whose relatives had been put into Vichy concentration camps under Darlan's orders would consider his assassination a patriotic act. We knew Darlan had brought on himself the hatred of many people.

At the time we did not know by just what group the blow had been struck. Was the young Chapelle a French patriot who was performing what he considered a worth-while deed for his country? Was he acting alone, or were others concerned? Or was it possible that some Vichyite felt that, in striking down Darlan, he would be striking a blow for Pétain? Later we found out who was behind the deed.

It would be hypocritical and misleading to say that the people of Algiers were downcast. I had never seen so many smiles, heard so much cheery badinage on the streets and in the restaurants as I did that Christmas Day. It seemed as though for the moment a load had been lifted from people's hearts. British and Americans joked a good deal, too. It is polite nonsense, that phrase about *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*. If a man has acted viciously and been responsible for the suffering of many people in his life, death does not change him, or the influence he once had. There are too many good people to mourn for.

Darlan's career had been too plain for the world to see to win him many tears now.

Perhaps the man who felt the most genuine indignation

was Admiral Cunningham. He became very angry at the sudden end of his fellow-admiral.

The fact reminded some wit of the story of Palmerston, Queen Victoria's famous Prime Minister.

A report reached Palmerston, so the story goes, of a revolt in some small Balkan country.

"The whole country has risen," said the first report. "The Royal Family has been taken prisoner."

Palmerston kept his equanimity and dropped the telegram unnoticed on his desk.

"The Royal Family has been shot by the revolutionists," came the next telegram. "British property is being destroyed."

Palmerston kept cool.

"British Embassy violated," came the report. "Revolutionists tore down British flag and trampled on it in the street. Have shot several prominent British subjects resident here. Revolutionists taking over British vessels in harbour sing 'To hell with England and Queen Victoria.'"

Palmerston turned to other work on his desk.

Another telegram arrived. "Revolutionists have just shot Prime Minister."

Palmerston sprang to his feet. "So they're shooting Prime Ministers," he exclaimed. "Order out the army and navy. England declares war to-night."

Next day the body of Darlan lay in state in the Government Building and a file of curious Algerians passed in front of it.

One was a teacher and journalist, the father of Bonnier de la Chapelle. He met a colleague in the line.

"I've just learned on good authority," whispered the colleague, "that the assassin's name is the same as your own, Chapelle. Have you any relatives of that name?"

"It can't be anyone of my family," Chapelle replied. "My only relative is my young son, and he's down at Oran this week."

I spent Christmas Day trying to get new details of the attack on Darlan. Except Chapelle's name, which was not made public for what the French called "reasons of national security," few details were available. It was not for a couple of days that tongues began to wag.

I pointed out in a broadcast that the most recent parallel had been the attack on Laval by a young Frenchman whose aim failed. I said that Darlan's death would knock out a prime factor in our diplomatic negotiations in North Africa, but would not in the slightest affect the fact that the average Frenchman was for the Allies.

I noted that even though our diplomats might be removed from the passions, mistakes, hatreds and loves of the common people, to reporters the tide of feeling against Darlan had been plain. Whether it would one day result in that particular act of violence against him we could not know.

On Christmas Day I heard that an attempt would be made to rush young Chapelle quickly before a firing squad, without recourse to public trial.

I wrote a script for my night broadcast saying that since the Vichy Government had been established the French right of public trial had been laid aside and it would be a good test of the new administration of North Africa if the man who killed Darlan were given a fair trial so that the rights and wrongs of the matter could be fairly examined. I pointed out that the man was not accused of espionage, but merely of a crime of murder that could be tried in open court.

The censors refused to pass this broadcast on the grounds that my charge—that an attempt was being made to rush through the execution of the man in the next few hours—was an unjust accusation against the justice of the French Government.

That night we reporters were called to another late conference. An official French communiqué announced that Chapelle was to be executed next morning at dawn, only thirty-eight hours after he had committed his crime.

The injustice of the whole proceeding affected us profoundly. We felt, quite rightly, that the execution was being hurried through without the man's having a chance to defend himself.

Most of us had hoped that if he were given the right of public trial, he might explain his reasons for the act, reasons which by many Frenchmen might be regarded as patriotic ones. He might in the end be condemned to death

for his act, but he would have had the chance to defend himself and be judged by public opinion.

We in North Africa were surprised by President's Roosevelt's reported emphatic condemnation of the affair as "murder in the first degree" when news of Darlan's death reached America. It might have been murder, but we were not at all sure about the "first degree." How could that be known unless the man were tried? We wondered what would have been the reaction if Laval had been killed. There was little difference between them. If Laval had been in North Africa, he might have been in Darlan's place.

I think every correspondent at that late night conference was shaken by the quick execution of Chapelle, even though we did not know him, his motives, or who was behind him. It went against all our ideas of impartial justice. The man was being railroaded. Was it to cover up someone else?

It was somewhere around two o'clock of the morning of December 26th that we again sat down at our microphone. Again my report was the first to go out and N.B.C. was the first broadcasting system or news agency to learn that Chapelle was about to be executed.

I asserted that we could never know from this unknown young man, whose name was being kept secret, the motives that had inspired him to his deed.

And I ended by saying: "The sentence that was so quickly and easily decided will have been carried out a few hours from now in the cold Algerian dawn before a firing squad. Yet there will be questions, questions that will remain."

After me came Mann, Collingwood and Dunnett in that order. All had serious faces. They, like myself, were greatly moved by this hasty execution.

Censorship strictly limited our comments. But Mann did say that the "Unknown Assassin" of this war might some day rank in the minds of the French like the "Unknown Soldier" of the last war. We felt very tired when we had finished. Beside us in the bedroom-studio stood Kibling's Christmas tree, which he had decorated with bits of tinfoil from cigarette packages and pieces of coloured paper. But we no longer felt any trace of the Christmas spirit. Driving home from the studio, the four of us did little talking.

Within a day or so Nogues, Chatel, General Bergeret, one of those who signed the armistice with Hitler, Boisson, Governor of Dakar, and Giraud had met. They did what everyone expected and chose Giraud as the new chief of the administration. Everyone hoped a new era had begun.

To understand the background of Darlan's death, it must be realized that three main currents of political thought and feeling prevailed in North Africa.

First, almost everyone who could be described as liberal, everyone who believed in a Republican France and nearly everyone who sincerely hoped for an Allied victory, was de Gaullist.

Secondly, the Vichyites, while not numerous, held most of the official jobs. Many had been given official posts because of their pro-Axis leanings and the trust reposed in them by Laval, Darlan, Pétain and the other Vichy chiefs. They held a great deal of power and it was with them that the Allies were dealing. They followed Darlan. Many did not like the Allies, but were content to string along with us while it looked as though we were winning.

Thirdly, the Monarchists were not numerically or politically strong, but they moved mysteriously among both the de Gaullists and the Vichyites. They would work for a restoration of French monarchy in the person of the young Count of Paris. Meanwhile they would try to manoeuvre both the other camps.

Monarchy was stronger in North Africa than in any other part of France. Monarchists who hated the Third Republic preferred to emigrate to North Africa or serve in the army's African campaigns rather than adapt themselves to the life of Republican France. Both in army circles and in high society and diplomacy, it was considered smart to be monarchist.

There were some Monarchists who were content to go patiently along with the current of history, hoping that one day France would decide to come to herself again and take a king. With this type of Frenchman, monarchy was little more than a heliotrope-and-verbena-scented memory, a mildly nostalgic belief about as important as Jacobitism in England during the last century.

But there were other Monarchists who saw in North

Africa a chance to establish a monarchy for France. Some of these had been Cagoulards or had supported the Cagoulards, had believed that with or without Germany's help they could overthrow the Third Republic by force and install a king in France.

These men were dangerous, because they were fanatics. They moved in influential circles and could number men of power and wealth among their friends. Ruthless in their determination, they were intelligent enough to influence others.

To any reasonably thorough student of French politics, the idea of turning France into a monarchy at this late date seems chimerical. When even Fascism, the modern equivalent of absolute monarchy, had failed in France, these men were tangling themselves in a daydream to try to thrust monarchy on the French *petit bourgeois*. Yet they remembered that twice before in France's history, monarchy had replaced Republicanism. They would try a third time.

The Count of Paris had once approached General de Gaulle and got no response. General Giraud was believed to be a Monarchist. With him in North Africa, the way should be easy.

By a process that had never been explained, some people of the Cagoulard-Monarchist school of thought got into the inner circles of the French who knew of the coming invasion of North Africa. Once the Allies landed, they thought, it should not be difficult to place the Count of Paris at the head of the Administration. He would be a unifying factor in the confusion. Americans had not shown any marked animosity when his name was brought up in conversation.

Among this group were men like Lemaigre-Dubreuil, a big industrialist; Jean Rigault, who later became Darlan's Secretary of the Interior, and Minister of Information; and d'Astier de la Vigerie, of a family well known in North Africa.

Then as accident would have it, Darlan came on the scene. It was with Darlan that the Americans treated and before the Monarchists realized which end was up, Darlan had a firm grasp on the political power in North Africa.

Darlan may have been unscrupulous, but he was extremely intelligent. He knew very well that monarchy was not going to come out of the *mêlée* of France.

Darlan, with his tight hold on the North African Administration and his equally tight hold on the Allies, may have had some ideas about the future of France. But if there were any power to be got, he would get it for Jean Darlan, not for that slick-haired young man with the little black moustache, the Count of Paris.

Darlan's stocky figure stood in the way of all the Count of Paris's hopes. Before his death, the Count of Paris's father, the Duc de Guise, had been but an indifferent standard-bearer for the Monarchists. He was a comfortable old gentleman, devoted to his learned studies and far too democratic in his political beliefs for those who wanted to make him King of France. But the young Count was a man of more spirit. He did dashing things, flying into the France from which he had been exiled, enlisting in the Foreign Legion. The Count was just the man to appreciate a daring political *coup* and take advantage of it. Darlan barred the way, so Darlan, some Monarchists thought, should be removed.

Lemaigre-Dubreuil went to America. He had good connections there. When the moment came he could explain the *coup* to the Americans.

Before anything was attempted, the trail of those responsible must be covered up. All the world knew that the de Gaullist Republicans were hostile to Darlan. They openly admitted it in their secretly published paper, *Combat*. They had shown their enmity to Vichy by helping the Anglo-American landings. It was no secret that they were disappointed that their efforts had not resulted in a Liberal pro-Allied Administration in North Africa. Here was a perfect red-herring to draw across the trail.

D'Astier de la Vigerie had the de Gaullists' confidence. His friend and colleague Rigault was close to Darlan. One night in early December, a group of young de Gaullists went out in the streets of Algiers to paste up posters bearing slogans like "*Vive de Gaulle*" on the walls.

By a curious coincidence strong patrols of police began combing the quiet streets at just the hour that the de Gaullists began their work. Many of the de Gaullists were caught and put in jail.

A few days later an official circular was sent to various

branches of the police warning that de Gaullists were about to attempt to assassinate Darlan on December 24th. The stage was set.

Later, insistent rumour had it that the original scheme had been for four young men in two cars to catch Darlan in his car on an open road. One car would crash into Darlan's motor-cycle outrider. The second would draw up alongside Darlan's limousine, spray the interior with a Tommy-gun and speed away. The scheme was dropped as involving too many people. The four young Royalist volunteers are said to have drawn lots for the second scheme. Chapelle won.

The Count of Paris (who is not likely to have been told that actual murder was contemplated) was seen in Algiers, but the deed was committed. Then things began to go wrong.

For the *coup* to have any chance of success, it must have the support of the United States and also of Giraud.

But for Mr Murphy exchanging friendly pleasantries and personal good wishes with the Count of Paris was one thing: actually to propose to Washington to give the Count American support was another. No diplomat with a grain of sense could believe for a minute that the American people would approve such a move. Any diplomat knew that forwarding such a suggestion to Washington would mean kissing his future career good-bye. In Algiers cold water was immediately dashed on the first hint of such a suggestion.

Nor was Giraud more helpful. From a fairly reliable source, I heard that Giraud expressed his personal esteem for the Count. He said that while he personally believed that a king might be the means of achieving French unity, he could not advise or approve an attempt by the Count to assume power in North Africa.

"Be patient," Giraud is reported to have said in effect. "When all France is liberated will be time enough to see whether monarchy can again return to our country."

The impatient Count of Paris is said to have become extremely angry and to have referred to Giraud in violent terms. Soon afterwards, the Count left Algiers for his farm in Spanish Morocco. The *coup* had failed, as it was doomed from the first to fail.

Chapelle had died insisting that he had no accomplices.

Until the end he seems to have been sure that he would not be executed. To the police he spoke of his future career in diplomacy. When, in a few hours, it became evident that the *coup* had failed, Chapelle alive was far too dangerous. He was rushed before a firing squad.

What would happen now? That was what the high Vichyite officials of North Africa were asking themselves. With Darlan gone, the fiction that they were representing the real wishes of Marshal Pétain could not be maintained. These past weeks had shown them—for they kept close and constant touch by means of official informants with public opinion throughout North Africa—that de Gaulle's influence was growing stronger and stronger. Over the whole territory, more and more people were saying that only de Gaulle could bring unity to North Africa. Giraud was known to be not unfriendly to de Gaulle. Yet if de Gaulle were suddenly to appear in North Africa, what Vichyite could expect to hold his job? De Gaulle was known to be unalterably opposed to two types of Frenchmen, those who had collaborated with the Axis and those who were responsible for the armistice.

What could Bergeret expect? Now Bergeret was next in power to Giraud himself. Yet Bergeret had put France's signature on the armistice agreement. Bergeret once told me of that scene in the railroad car at Compiègne.

For him, he said, it had been a hard ordeal. Yet Bergeret spoke to me with unconscious admiration of the way in which Hitler had dominated the gathering, how he had paced up and down, how his eyes had seemed to burn into and master the group of Germans and Frenchmen alike. And Bergeret had signed his name as a lasting record of France's shame. What could Bergeret expect from de Gaulle, the man who never admitted France was defeated?

What about Chatel, reputed all over North Africa to be an Axis tool? What about Boisson, who had opened fire at Dakar on de Gaulle's emissaries, the grandson of Foch, and the priest, d'Argenlieu, while they came ashore under a white flag to parley? What could Boisson, who even now held hundreds of de Gaullists in prison, expect from the arrival of de Gaulle? And Nogues, the man who changed his mind and ordered resistance to the Allies?

These were the men who controlled North Africa. What matter public opinion? They would fight to the end to keep de Gaulle out, to drive a wedge between him and Giraud if that were possible. Talk French unity to the outside world and smear de Gaulle secretly. That was the policy.

The Vichyites wasted no time. Rigault was the head of Giraud's political information section. To cover up the Royalists by hitting the de Gaullists was a fine idea. Bergeret was eager to find some means of getting at the de Gaullists. Perhaps if de Gaullists could be held responsible for Darlan's murder, public opinion might begin to run against them.

While we're at it let's make a real job of it. Accuse them of plotting against Giraud. That will frighten the old man. And Murphy too. Americans won't like that. So the "plot" was arranged.

An outline of the purported "plot" was hastily drafted. To it was appended a list of names of men to be arrested. It was taken to Giraud. Giraud started when he saw it. "These men, plotting against me?" he asked.

"Yes, General," he was told, "not only you, but Mr Murphy. They were involved in the death of our great confrère, Admiral Darlan. They must be arrested at once, to-night."

Giraud scratched his signature on the order for the arrests. After all, the details were vouched for by French generals. Their word was beyond doubt.

On December 29th at least fourteen men were suddenly arrested. Some excellent sources at the time gave sixteen as the total number, but two of those arrested seemed to have no known political connections with the rest of the group and their arrest may have been for other reasons.

The fourteen were among the most prominent Allied sympathizers in Algiers. They were men respected in North African life. They had made no secret of their sympathies. Some had actively aided the Allied landings. But because of their position in the community and their known integrity, up to now the Vichyites had not dared to touch them.

Four were high officials. Achairy, head of counter-espionage, was reputed to have a secret dossier on promi-

nent Vichyites that might one day reveal too plainly their connections with the Axis. Muscatelli was chief of police in Algiers; Bringard was chief of the Ministry of the Interior police; Esqueret held a post equivalent to that of Police Commissioner. These men had revealed themselves as friendly to the Allies. They were too friendly to suit the Vichyites.

Three fathers and sons were arrested including the respected former Mayor of Algiers, Charles Brunel, who many people thought would be named Governor-General of Algeria when the Allies arrived. He and his son were both taken. Monsieur Alexandre and his son were both textile manufacturers. The elder was a personal friend of Giraud and it was to his house for safekeeping that Giraud sent his luggage before he himself landed in North Africa.

Policemen came by night to the house of old Dr Henri Abouker. While a policeman covered his eight-year-old grandson with a Tommy-gun, others dragged the crippled old man out of bed and off to the police station. They had been hunting for his son, Joseph, who was also arrested that night.

It later appeared that the arrest of the elder Brunel and old Abouker had been a mistake. Brunel was at once released when his identity was established and old Dr Abouker some days afterwards.

Another man of the same name but not a close relative, Dr Raphael Abouker, had performed a striking part in the invasion. It had been intended that the first voice to be heard on Algiers radio after the landing should be that of an American. Instead, it was a French voice, Dr Raphael Abouker reading General Giraud's original proclamation. He too was arrested.

Others taken in the net included Professors Capitan, a prominent de Gaullist and professor of law at the Algiers University, Dr Morelli and a man named Temimi.

Dr Morelli, young Alexandre and young Abouker had all been out on the beaches helping the original landings.

By no wildest stretch of the imagination could any of these men have had anything to do with the death of Darlan. The thought that they could have plotted the mur-

der of Giraud and Murphy was as ridiculous as accusing Mr Willkie of plotting to murder President Roosevelt and the Russian Ambassador.

If an order had been sent out to pick up a dozen of the most prominent Allied supporters in Algiers, the list of names might have been very similar.

Under such conditions, it was impossible to keep the arrests secret. The people involved were too well known.

By the morning after the arrests, some American reporters had the list of names. This was important information that Americans at home should know. They must now know what had been happening in North Africa. This was the penalty of helping the Allies. This was what happened to the men whose aims were our aims, whose only crime was too great a trust in America and Britain. We wanted to know what the British and American authorities were going to do about it. If General Giraud had been so naïve as to accept that trumped-up story of a "plot," our publics should know that as well. What were the proofs?

A temporary stop was placed on all news of the arrests.

Late that afternoon Robert Murphy received us in his villa. I do not think that press and radio reporters of the two democracies have ever so well represented public opinion as they did that afternoon. From a roomful of perhaps forty American and British reporters, not one single approving or even complaisant voice was raised. For an hour and a half we criticized Anglo-American policy in North Africa since the beginning. If the criticism had been only made by a few, if even one or two had defended that policy by implication, Murphy's task would have been easier. But this was a completely unanimous, outspoken denunciation voiced at some time or other by every man in the room.

We wanted to know whether any proofs had been seen by Allied officials. No. What did the Allies intend to do about getting our friends out of prison? The Allies didn't control North Africa; they could only make suggestions and must not infringe on internal matters of the French authorities. What authorities, we asked, the men appointed by Vichy? A statement was made that the term "our friends" musn't be misused. Only two had helped us actively. Then under

questioning it was admitted that others might have helped us but on the early morning of November 8th only two were in active contact with Murphy.

How would America and Britain be regarded by the rest of the world, by the French themselves, we wanted to know, if they stood by while people who helped them were dragged off to prison? Were our representatives blind that they could not see what was happening in North Africa?

The talk covered the whole field of French internal politics and their relation to the Allied campaign. Murphy defended himself logically and well. Through it all our conversation was conducted on a friendly personal basis, for Murphy himself was likeable. But we did hammer, one after the other, at a policy that had furthered French disunity, had lost the Allies the respect of the French people and had now culminated in the imprisonment of prominent French sympathizers. The only jarring note in the proceedings came from an American colonel, who kept butting into the conversation to defend Murphy—a needless act—and who kept making off-stage remarks: what right did reporters have to question such affairs? “Ought to be in the army”; “all nonsense”; “just wanted sensational stories.”

One very interesting point came up in the talk. We were told that before Darlan's death, Darlan and Murphy had discussed some changes in the North African Administration. One of the names brought up had been that of Marcel Peyrouton, the ex-Vichy Minister of the Interior who had been tireless in his pursuit of Frenchmen who wanted to continue the fight against the Axis. It had been agreed that he should replace Monsieur Chatel as Governor-General of Algeria.

I made some exclamation about “What's the difference between the two?” It was explained in Peyrouton's favour that he and Laval were enemies and Peyrouton was a well-known colonial administrator and it was difficult to find colonial administrators. It was even a question whether General de Gaulle could furnish them, although under present circumstances it was out of the question to call him in immediately.

At the end of the talk, Murphy looked thoughtful. I.

think he realized from our reaction the impact that certain features of our North African diplomacy were bound to have on public opinion. It was a difficult job, trying to keep happy at one and the same time the French officials with whom he mixed daily, the army, and public opinion at home as represented by forty reporters.

Giraud received us with a stiff bow. He informed us that he was only a soldier and hated interviews. The general began with a somewhat rambling talk on the French Army's need for more modern weapons. To fight hard at the front, he said, commanders must have order behind the lines.

"Order is not complete," he stated, "when a High Commissioner like Admiral Darlan is assassinated." He spoke of his aim as winning the war and told the reporters they must write that the French Army needed planes, tanks and guns. "The High Commissioner of Africa," he said, "is only a soldier who thinks of winning the war."

We began to question him. The general admitted he had ordered the arrests. I asked him whether the newly arrested people were going to be shot as quickly as Chapelle had been shot. Giraud looked at me quizzically. "You speak French very well, monsieur," he said. "No. They will not be shot."

He charged that the four police officials arrested had known Darlan was going to be assassinated and hadn't warned their superiors.

I asked whether he really believed that he himself was in any way threatened with an attempt on his life. The general said he did and others including Murphy were threatened.

Another reporter told him that public opinion in America and Britain was deeply disturbed because men appointed by Laval and known as ardent pro-German collaborationists still held office in North Africa. Giraud answered that he did not see many collaborationists in power.

The general quoted Murphy as saying that two of the arrested men had helped us and admitted the rest were sympathizers and might have helped us. One was a personal friend, he said, but under like circumstances he would act the same towards any friend. He frequently used the

phrase "better to prevent than punish" and spoke of putting the arrested men "in shelter."

Giraud seemed surprised at the interest in the situation shown by American and British reporters and kept insisting it was "just a French affair."

We came away from the conference impressed with two things—the general's obvious sincerity and the fact that he was evidently extremely naïve politically. He had his opportunity to take advantage of the fact that most Frenchmen accepted him in his new post as a welcome relief from Darlan. He did not have the Vichy background. By the use of a certain amount of firmness in dealing with the Vichyites, he could have at once won the support of the de Gaullists and begun the work of building French unity behind the Allies. Instead, he had begun his term of office with a silly blow against the Allies' best friends. As the weeks went by his indecision and political inexperience were partly responsible for the slow growth of the French unity he so often said he desired.

The "plot" in which the general said he believed that night was never credited for an instant by any North African reporter. The whole pretence of a "plot" was later quietly dropped and the men were as quietly released. The elder Brunel became president of the Algerian Economic Advisory Council; Monsieur Muscatelli became Préfet of Algiers; Bringard was appointed head of the Algerian State Police; young Brunel was given a high post in the Préfecture.

A few weeks after our interview with Giraud it was announced that other arrests had been made. They were two: d'Astier de la Vigerie and the Abbé Cordier, rumoured to be a kind of *éminence grise* among the Royalists. Headquarters officers could not understand why none of us seemed to get excited about the new arrests. It was helpfully pointed out to us that d'Astier had a brother with de Gaulle. He had gone from France to join the Fighting French after our North African landing. To us, the new arrests were not cause for alarm, but perhaps cause for thinking that the mills of God did not grind as slowly as we had at first believed.

CHAPTER VII

THE POLICY OF CONFUSION

OVER our morning tea (we couldn't get coffee), Merrill Mueller and I were discussing Allied diplomacy. Half-joking, half-serious, we had begun to wonder whether the confusion we had seen in North Africa was going to be repeated on the Continent.

"After all," said Mueller, "this has gone against everything we expected. We may be intending to do the same thing on the Continent."

"Trust a Darlan and you will trust a Farinacci," I said. "What's the difference between a Peyrouton and a Mannerheim?"

In conference after conference those first days of January and the last days of December, we had heard nonsensical statement after nonsensical statement made by French and Allied spokesmen of all ranks and positions.

Mueller remembered what an Allied spokesman had said about Darlan. "Will they say they 'didn't know about Goering's past, but he certainly worked with us'?" Mueller asked.

I sat down at the typewriter, still half-angry, half-joking. This is what I wrote:

AMERICAN NEWS FLASHES

WASHINGTON (AIF). January 7th, 1945. United Nations leaders meeting here to-day confirmed the provincial appointment of General Goering as head of the newly occupied German State. An official Allied spokesman said: "I do not know about his past career, but as long as General Goering has worked with us, he faithfully fulfilled all his engagements."

LONDON (AIF). January 7th, 1945. Informed quarters here to-day professed ignorance of all diplomatic developments in Europe since the Continent's occupation by Allied armies.

WARSAW (AIF). January 7th, 1945. A United States official

to-day said: "If we should remove the German administrators from Poland whom have we got to fill their places?"

ROME (AIF). January 7th, 1945. Signor Farinacci, head of the new Italian Government, to-day pledged total adherence to the Atlantic Charter and the Principles of Democracy. "There is no need," he said, "to arrest Fascist leaders. Their organization is dissolved."

BELGRADE (AIF). January 7th, 1945. A Government spokesman to-day told reporters: "If King Peter returns at this time, we cannot be responsible for acts committed by the enraged population."

OSLO (AIF). January 7th, 1945. The American minister to-day said: "I know Quisling and the men around him. They are not as bad as you might think."

ATHENS (AIF). January 7th, 1945. Informed that since the Allied occupation, four hundred persons described as "Jews and Communists" had been sent to concentration camps, a United Nations spokesman expressed surprise. He said: "After all, this is not our affair."

HELSINKI (AIF). January 7th, 1945. Reminded of his promise made six months ago, to free Allied sympathizers, Baron Mannerheim to-day said: "I subscribe fully to the principles of Democracy. But you journalists must remember there are several hundred thousand dossiers to examine. Rome wasn't built in a day."

(News flashed by courtesy of AIF, the ALL IN FUN News Agency.)

I typed it out and read it to Mueller. He laughed and we decided the other correspondents might be amused. It was stuck on the bulletin board of the correspondents' conference room. They did laugh as we expected. Philip Jordan even copied down some of the paragraphs and sent them to his paper. By late afternoon when I returned to the room, the ALL-IN-FUN news-sheet had disappeared.

The little news items of 1945 were a joke. But they were also expressive of the disillusionment that had crept into our political thought. Leaders at home were making excellent speeches on the world of the future. But we had seen events in North Africa. To us they were no guarantee that the future world was going to be anything like the world most Americans were fighting for.

It was all very well to talk about making arrangements with these Fascists so that the blood of American boys

should not be spilled. The making of the arrangement had cancelled the things for which we were fighting—so every sacrifice was a useless one.

If we were going into Italy just to arrange that a Grandi should be substituted for a Mussolini, or some yet unnamed German general for a Hitler, we might as well never have fought at all.

I think most of us felt, too, that the ineptness of American diplomacy when it was finally exposed might provoke a feeling among people at home that "since we blunder so badly abroad, we'd better stay home and to hell with the rest of the world." We felt that the blunders might give ammunition to the isolationists in their inane argument that by some mysterious process America could isolate herself from the rest of the world. None of us thought that was true for a minute and most correspondents in Europe, I believe, realize that only if America takes her share of the responsibility for world organization after the war will the idea of world peace have the chance of a tear-drop in hell.

It seemed to reporters on the spot that we should have placed more trust in the support of the ordinary French people of North Africa, and less in the handpicked Vichy Fascists who governed them.

We remembered some of the diplomats of our acquaintance who had come out of Vichy praising the marshal and on excellent terms with one of the most motley collections of rascals yet unhanged in Europe. I remembered the times I had talked to Frenchmen who had escaped from France, what I knew about the underground battle against the Germans and the feelings of the French people. I wondered how much time our Vichy diplomats had spent investigating and reporting on the feelings of the French people, and how much time in reporting what the Comtesse of This-and-That and Monsieur Le Ministre told them about French opinion.

For two months we had been in North Africa. Only a handful of persons, including some of the Fascists we had arrested on arrival, had yet been freed from the Vichy concentration camps.

A perhaps over-disillusioned American officer once said that the North African landing was the point at which we

began to win the war and lose the peace. I did not believe that. It was as false as most aphorisms. But I did not see clearly how North Africa was helping us win the peace. On the contrary, it had shocked opinion in France and in the rest of Europe.

When we landed in North Africa, we could have cleared every concentration camp in North Africa in a day by sending to each an officer and a platoon of men. In those camps were de Gaullists, Republicans, Liberals, Communists, Spanish Republican refugees who had fought the first battle for us against Fascism, Hitler and Mussolini. Not only did we not clear the camps, but we permitted Darlan to send to them anyone he wanted to.

At last it was announced on January 12th that an Allied committee was being formed to inspect the camps and urge the release of political prisoners.

The man who phrased what all of us felt was my friend and colleague, Édouard Baudry, correspondent of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. In his fluent French, Eddie said to the official French spokesman who made the announcement: "Why in the name of the liberty we are here to fight for, should men still remain in prison for their political beliefs?"

When we questioned Rigault, the former Cagouard whom Giraud permitted to hold high office for several months, the best he could promise was that those political prisoners who had won decorations for great gallantry in the last war would eventually be freed.

He said he thought very few would be arrested in the future.

Rigault was a dark, good-looking man of thirty-eight or forty. Like his friend, d'Astier, also a Cagouard, Rigault impressed me as a type of which fanatics are made. It was an intellectual fanaticism, the kind that on a higher plane might be portrayed by a Jesuit missionary. Rigault was fated to be, not a missionary, but a political manipulator in a lost cause. He seemed to be brooding on something that lay deep in the tortuous complexities of his being.

In our discussion of political prisoners Rigault took good care to smear the de Gaullists. At frequent intervals he took the line that the union of all Frenchmen was certainly some-

thing worth working for, but we American and British reporters must take good care not to reveal the truth, that the fourteen men arrested for implication in Darlan's assassination and the "plot" against Giraud and Murphy had de Gaullist connections. This would infuriate the local population, Rigault went on, against de Gaulle and make union impossible. He said we must not disclose that the assassin had connection with de Gaullist circles.

When a French official talks like that to reporters it means that he expects the reporters to spread the story, but he doesn't want it pinned on him. If someone were to question him on the story, Rigault could have proved that he had only mentioned the points to caution the correspondents against them.

French officials frequently irritated reporters by their apparent assumption that we know nothing of the situation they were discussing. Most of us had worked on many hundreds of stories in different parts of the world. We knew how to use our eyes and ears to find out what had happened and how and why. But officials like Rigault, Bergeret and some of the others went right on thinking that we, like the local French reporters whom they held under tight control, would accept and report their sometimes fantastic statements at face value.

I don't know of anyone who ever got what could be regarded as definitive figures of the numbers of political prisoners in concentration camps or working in forced labour gangs for the Foreign Legion or some other group. The number was probably not as high as some of the reports credited abroad nor as low as the Vichyite officials wanted us to think.

A few of the most prominent prisoners, the twenty-seven Communist deputies, for example, had been freed by early February. But although the Allied prisoners commission had been appointed in mid-January, it was not until towards the end of February that it began its inspection of the camps. A fairly large number were released as conditions permitted. Some of them became numbered among the best fighters in the French or the Allied armies, but the work of freeing political prisoners had not been concluded when the campaign ended.

I met some of the Communist deputies. They were imprisoned at the beginning of the war by the Daladier Government when the French Right was convinced that they could come to some arrangement with Germany and that France could eventually be inveigled into fighting Russia.

"We want the opportunity to mobilize the workers' opinion behind the Allies," one of them said. "But we have not yet been allowed to do this."

Most of the leaders of the Communist organization in North Africa were in jail or concentration camp. Working-class opinion distrusted the Administration and had no link of any kind with it. The speeches of Giraud and the Administration's attempt to arouse enthusiasm by slogans such as "One Sole Aim, Victory" or "Giraud, the Liberator" aroused hardly a ripple of interest among the workers. A war that seemed to have as its main purpose the maintenance of the Vichy Administration, whether the chief were Darlan, whom they hated, or Giraud, whom they hardly knew and never really trusted, could not inspire them to patriotic effort.

This lack of enthusiasm was apparent, especially among the dock workers who unloaded the freighters and transports.

Some time after Giraud had become High Commissioner, two or three Communist leaders approached an American officer who had charge of unloading operations in Oran. They said that if they could obtain some paper for pamphlets they would undertake to work up the Oran dockers to new efforts for a United Nations victory.

The American jumped at the chance of speeding up the unloading of his ships. He found some paper, a mimeographing machine and an automobile for the Communists. The automobile was to be used in distributing the pamphlets and taking the Communists from rally to rally. Then the Vichyite police swooped down, arrested the Communists, and confiscated the paper, mimeographing machine and car.

Nor was enthusiasm high in the French Army itself. When various units distinguished themselves, it was often found that their officers were pro-Ally de Gaullists. It was

too much to expect that French officers who had fought in Syria or Madagascar against the British and the Fighting French should now enter wholeheartedly into a fight against the Axis. For some officers the *mystique* of Pétain still remains strong, and any night on the radio they could hear Vichy telling them that their leaders were traitors and that they should not fight the Germans.

On the other side of the lines some Vichy officers actually volunteered to come to Tunisia to fight for the Germans at Pétain's behest. As late as early May a Vichy submarine was sunk as it attacked a British convoy. In Giraud's army were some officers who sympathized with, even if they did not emulate, Vichy's self-destructive philosophy.

It was known in Algiers in the early winter that some French officers who were loudest in their demands for new American and British equipment, hoped one day to be in a position to use that equipment against the Allies. When this question was raised with an official French spokesman the best that could be replied was that such officers were not numerous and would grow less and less as the campaign progressed.

All during the winter, North Africa was being over-mobilized. Giraud had spoken of an army of three hundred or three hundred and fifty thousand. Only a fraction of that number could be equipped. For the size of the population, such a mobilization was much too large. It would and did strain ordinary civilian services. Industry, agriculture, and the whole complex set-up of a modern civilized community would suffer when practically every man who could carry a rifle was put into the army whether the army had any rifles or uniforms for him or not.

When reports of lack of equipment began to arrive back at home, hard put to it to get along without the wage-earner, they did little to help the Allied cause. People began to ask what Giraud intended with the army. Did he feel he would carry more weight in Allied councils as commander of an army of 300,000 badly equipped men rather than 50,000 well equipped men? Or did he intend to use the army to establish himself in control of France? These were serious problems that occupied Frenchmen's minds.

At the beginning Giraud was not an easy man to work

with. He did not unbend easily. He had a great respect for himself and his own position. In talks with Allied leaders, he frequently referred to himself in the third person. Instead of saying: "I should like to do this or that," he would say: "General Giraud wishes this," and there he would expect all discussion to end. There was even some statement to the effect that French officers and soldiers could never campaign under any but a French commander-in-chief. When Giraud had once made up his mind, it was difficult to shake him.

Darlan, like the skilful politician he was, needed only a hint of Allied wishes. He understood at once the whys and wherefores and he was ready in a moment either to comply or to give immediate plausible reasons why he could not. Giraud on the other hand needed laborious explanations and arguments. Even then he could not be counted on to agree. It might take repetition after repetition of Allied advice or insistence before the move was made. Sometimes it almost appeared that dealing with the clever and unscrupulous Darlan offered less difficulty than dealing with the upright soldier the Americans themselves had chosen, Giraud.

As the winter wore on it became more and more plain that only de Gaulle could achieve any kind of unity or enthusiasm in North Africa.

But if American diplomacy since our landing had been a policy of confusion, the official American attitude towards de Gaulle was plain. American official circles had pointedly snubbed him. I knew something about General Charles de Gaulle. I was the first American correspondent to interview him after he had escaped from France to England. N.B.C. was the first American network to carry his voice on the air. In the years since then I had followed the growth of his movement carefully. I knew the policies of Fighting France and the men who made these policies. Except for Ambassador Anthony Biddle, who was not accredited to Fighting France but who manages to know most things about most European Governments, I thought I had as thorough a knowledge of de Gaulle and his movement as any American living.

From the voice of de Gaulle himself, one man who refused

to be defeated, the Fighting French movement had grown with the years until it now represented the whole of the oppressed fighting opinion inside France. I had seen attempts made to split the de Gaullists. I had seen de Gaulle himself broaden in perception during those years until from an army officer who would not see his country break her word, he became the man in whom millions of Frenchmen put their hopes of freedom.

I have an admiration for two qualities, honesty and courage. They seldom appear in international politics. De Gaulle had both and I admired him for it. The men who followed him had those qualities too. It was not easy to be an outcast from your own country, to follow the stilled voice of France's honour when every voice that could be publicly heard in France condemned you. Other fighters of the United Nations, the Poles, the Norwegians, the Greeks and all the rest had the satisfaction of knowing that they fought with the full approval of the only recognized governments of their countries. Fighting French soldiers, sailors and airmen had only to pick up a French station on the radio to hear themselves condemned by an American-recognized French government as traitors. Their leaders, Catroux, the Koenigs, Leclercs, and de Larminat, who joined de Gaulle, asked for no reward except the opportunity of freeing their country.

In the eyes of the American public, de Gaulle represented the only important bit of France that remained. The feelings of the American people were plainly shown when an American State Department official angrily referred to de Gaulle's movement after the St Pierre and Miquelon *coup* as the "so-called Free French." A wave of indignation against the State Department's attitude evidenced itself in the American press and on the radio. The American people heartily approved de Gaulle and his blow. The State Department's hinted threat to insist that the islands be given back to Vichy was never carried out.

It has been argued that officially America could not be friendly to de Gaulle and Vichy at the same time. That argument assumes that Vichy, while she still hoped to gain something from America, would have broken off relations with the United States over de Gaulle.

It postulates also that the policy of keeping up relations with Vichy would bring some gain. The French Fleet might have been worth the two and a half years of petting Pétain. But the French Fleet sank at Toulon.

Instead of thoroughly investigating the opinion of the French people, examining the bases of the resistance movements inside France, then taking a clear stand for or against de Gaulle on the evidence obtained, the State Department tried a new policy of dealing with each area of the French Empire separately.

This was a policy of division. It assumed that the people of Martinique felt like Martiniquians, the people of Algeria like Algerians, the people of Vichy like Vichyites and the people of the Chad like Chaddites. Under this hypothesis, none of these people thought or felt like Frenchmen.

The Americans would deal with de Gaulle, but only as regards the territory the Fighting French controlled such as Equatorial Africa or New Caledonia. The authorities of North Africa would be the people to see about North Africa, and down in Martinique, the dictatorial Vichyite, Admiral Robert, would be regarded by some diplomatic sleight-of-hand as entirely autonomous and having nothing to do with the government he obeyed, namely Vichy.

The policy, based on a fiction, naturally turned out to be something of a fiction. When the North African campaign had ended, the Americans were getting angry about the diplomatic negotiations with Admiral Robert which he had skilfully spun out for long months. Having themselves fashioned the bases for the negotiations, the American diplomats could not now change them without losing a certain amount of face. Years before, they could have backed a Fighting French fifth column on the islands, moved in with a powerful naval force, and taken the islands with a minimum of bloodshed. But diplomacy spun out, and Admiral Robert merrily continued to obey his chief, Pétain, and the American negotiators resolutely kept up the myth that he was independent of Vichy. In the post-war diplomatic schools, the Martinique negotiations may serve as the horrible example of what not to do in wartime diplomacy.

In the same way, to deal with Equatorial Africa on the basis that the territory had nothing at all to do with the

Fighting French headquarters in London equalled the absurd reduced to pie.

So in pursuance of this policy, de Gaulle was only informed of the North African expedition the night of the landings.

If they had wished, the Allies could have taken de Gaulle to North Africa. He would have been accepted. Anyone the Allies brought would have been accepted. Instead, the Americans chose General Giraud. He had escaped from prison and did not like the Germans. Other than that, there was no observable reason for the choice. He was unknown to the North Africans; he was just another French general. Yet all North Africans knew that the Frenchman most hated by the Germans was de Gaulle.

Once the deed was done and Allied troops were in North Africa, another alternative faced us. Over the course of two and a half years Vichy had tried to erase all vestiges of Republican France. High officials and officials who were thought to favour the Allies were replaced by pro-Axis Vichy men. The others were imprisoned, retired, or recalled to France. Every city and town in North Africa had its regularly elected mayors and councils. At one blow, Vichy suppressed all these elected officials and bodies. A Vichy appointee was chosen to administer each area. On the day we landed, we could have declared that the only authority we would recognize in North Africa would be the elected officials and councils who had held office under the Republic.

We could have refused to deal with any official appointed in the preceding two years by Vichy.

Instead, we dealt only with the Vichy officials. We recognized their authority based on the trust placed in them by Laval, Darlan and the Axis, instead of the authority of officials elected by the people or chosen by a government under which the people's will could be made manifest.

When in the spring of 1943, the elected mayors and councils began to be reinstated in office, almost invariably their first official act was to draft a telegram affirming their entire support of General de Gaulle and Fighting France. It all must have been slightly embarrassing for the Vichyites, who had for months been dinning into the ears of the

Americans and British the story that de Gaulle was highly unpopular among the people of North Africa. He was unpopular, but not among the people.

One day in Algiers I was talking with a high American officer about de Gaulle.

"But I hear," he said, "that we are backing Giraud because Giraud has promised us some concessions after the war and the British are backing de Gaulle because he has promised them some concessions."

"I don't think your story is true," I said. "If it is, the boys up at the front ought to know about it. I don't think they'd like it. But seriously, the story sounds crazy. We'll have to be giving plenty to the whole of Europe after this war, so it can stand on its feet again. What could France possibly give either nation after the war and how could either of these men make such a promise for France? No. The story sounds crazy."

"Anyway, they say de Gaulle is in the British pocket," the officer continued. "We've treated him badly. Won't he resent it and just be a kind of British agent in France?"

To anyone who knew the history of the Fighting French, the officer's theory was laughable. Too often I had heard British officials speak angrily of de Gaulle's stiff-necked independence. The whole British Cabinet could not get him to move unless he was convinced that the move would serve the interests of France. His troops and his officials were no mercenaries working for England, he said. They represented France, Britain's equal among the nations, and they must be treated as such. On the other hand I knew de Gaulle well enough to know that if he believed crawling on his knees up and down Broadway would best help France, he would not hesitate to do so.

Even after the campaign was finished and de Gaulle was in Algiers, old echoes of the story, "Oh, de Gaulle is all right, it's the men around him," were still resounding across the Atlantic.

The "men around de Gaulle" were not a band of supermen, but then, neither were the men around Churchill or the men around Roosevelt. De Gaulle accepted everyone from any party who offered to fight wholeheartedly for France's freedom. They came from extreme Right, extreme

Left, and all the way down the middle. Some were good and some were not so good. By and large they were as patriotic a group of Frenchmen as it was possible to assemble. De Gaulle could not pick and choose at the beginning. As more and more men came out of France, representing the organizations who were fighting inside the country, de Gaulle made changes and found places for them.

Between the Fighting French and the Vichyites existed a few men in London and Washington who were neither. Some were men who were disappointed that de Gaulle had not immediately offered them a high position. One or two were typical French intellectuals who could be happy in no organized effort.

In America were some representatives of French big business. They feared that because the Russians had gone further than any other government in recognizing de Gaulle as representing France, de Gaulle was too far to the Left. Communism was still a bugbear.

It was from men like these that the story about the "men around de Gaulle" originally came. The whisper that he was a Fascist, a Bonapartist, might be good propaganda. Spread that in America.

Some of the men were former diplomats and their dislike of de Gaulle could be whispered in an influential ear or two.

"De Gaulle doesn't represent anything except a handful of Frenchmen out to line their own pockets, old man. *Je vous assure* it would be a mistake to concern yourselves too much with him."

But Fighting France survived the campaign of smears. And truly, the men around de Gaulle were a band of shining saints in comparison with the men around Giraud, the men we dealt with and supported so long in Africa.

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CHAPTER VIII

CASABLANCA CONFERENCE

I WAS tired of headquarters, tired of politics, tired of getting war news second-hand. I wanted to go to the front. Communications between the front and headquarters were now fairly well organized. Our recording equipment had arrived after many delays and was now being installed in a Signal Corps truck. I felt that I would be able to send back reports for broadcast that would give listeners at home a more vivid idea of the campaign than anything yet put on the air.

Also I had enough information to be fairly certain that a large operation was being planned in the southern area of the front. And Red Mueller had agreed to do my regular broadcasts for me.

I asked Colonel McCormack for a car and driver for myself, Collingwood, Dunnett and Mann, and told him of the arrangements for the recording truck. He agreed, but his attitude surprised me.

The colonel said: "If I were you I'd wait a day or two. You never can tell when you might not be getting some worth-while news here."

"The only important story that could break here would be the arrival of de Gaulle," I said, "and the way I feel at the moment, that isn't a big enough story to keep me here."

I didn't want to explain I had heard a big operation was under way. I might be the only reporter to know about it. Once a hint of it got out every reporter on the front might come crowding to that particular area.

I wired my London office, to let them know I was leaving, and started getting my gear together. Then an incredible rumour came to my ears: Roosevelt, Churchill, Giraud, and de Gaulle were about to meet in North Africa.

Why was Major Flood so slow about making arrangements for me to leave? Why did General McClure say that if anything important were to happen he'd see I was

brought back from the front? Evidently, because they knew something they were not allowed to talk about. It looked as though the rumour might be true. I wired my office that I had decided to delay my trip to the front for a few days.

At ten o'clock one morning my telephone bell rang. "Report at the public relations office in half an hour," said a voice. "Don't bring anything heavier than your musette bag. You are going on a trip but you won't need your bedroll."

I flung a few things in my haversack and hurried to the office. Within an hour, I was in a Douglas C-47 transport plane headed for Casablanca. Ten or twelve other reporters were aboard, as well as General McClure and Colonel McCormack. Even then, some of the correspondents did not know where we were going or what was happening. The secret had been well kept. The general told us he would explain everything to us as soon as he could after our arrival. Meanwhile we were not to discuss any of the rumours we might hear or do any speculating where we might be overheard.

We flew the hundreds of miles to Casablanca in clear sunshine. Beneath us slipped an ever-changing carpet of red earth, green fields, bare craggy mountains where no plane could have landed; and then the desert, scarred with wadis, dry river beds. As usual, over those North African mountains with their shifting currents of hot and cold air, the ride was bumpy, but none of us became air-sick.

In Casablanca we went to our hotel. The general disappeared. There was a possibility that we might be called to attend an important conference that evening. In that case, our plane-load of reporters would be lucky. The rest of the correspondents would not arrive until the next day or the day after that.

The first thing was to find out what was happening. As we came into the hotel, almost the first person I bumped into was Sammy Shulman. He was a round, cheery-faced photographer for I.N.P. and an old hand in Europe. Years before, we had occupied adjoining offices in Paris and we were delighted at meeting again in Casablanca. He warned me that the rooms of the hotel might be "wired for sound" by the local Vichyites, so we made for an open space where

nobody could approach without our seeing him and I started cross-examining Sammy. Sammy had been in Casablanca for weeks.

Yes, it was all true as I had heard it. Sammy had been shooting pictures of the President and Mr Churchill. The real secrecy of the trip had been broken when the President drove out and inspected American Army units.

Sammy's first inkling of what was about to happen had been in a bar. As he lifted his glass, he suddenly noticed three alert-looking men in civilian clothes enter the door. They were White House Secret Service men whom Sammy had known in Washington. They made a beeline for the photographer.

"Sammy," they said. "you're the only man in Casablanca who knows us. If so much as a whisper of this gets out we'll know who's responsible. You'll be up before a court martial."

"Nuts," said Sammy. "You know me, boys, quiet as a tomb. Have a drink?"

A young United Press reporter was also there when we arrived. He had been given permission to go to Dakar. Stopping at Casablanca he had heard something might be happening and stayed on. The presence of a reporter seemed as dangerous as a time-bomb to the military security authorities who were responsible for the President's safety. They grabbed the reporter, threatened him with everything but shooting at dawn, then let him go.

We learned that our expected conference would not take place that night, but possibly the next afternoon. All we had to do was to kill time. We were promised we should be given full information when it was permissible.

Most of us liked Morocco. The clean, fresh air sweeping in from the Atlantic over the green fields was invigorating after the heavier, more torpid atmosphere of Algeria. The country had more of the *Beau Geste* French colonial appearance than either Algeria or Tunisia. The Arabs were cleaner-looking and appeared more independent. Even in the streets of Casablanca they wore the yellow Moroccan slippers and their traditional robes.

In Arab shops we could find slippers, morocco leather pocket-books, brief cases and bags. Jay Allen, then head of

the political warfare section in Morocco, was a friend of eight or ten years' standing. He had been coming to Morocco for years and knew everyone and everything about the territory.

We could eat well at the American officers' mess where steaks, such as some of us had not seen for years, were served, and outside town at the "Coup de Roulée," mar-cassin, baby wild boar, was a tasty dish.

Next day, our conference was again postponed. We heard many interesting rumours of the personalities supposed to have arrived. Spain, Russia, Turkey and Finland were mentioned by rumour as participants. The report even named the people present. Someone believed he had seen an Italian transport escorted by American fighters. What could that be?

Rumour among the people of Casablanca itself had followed an interesting development. When people began to be moved out of their beautiful villas in the Anfa section outside the city and barbed wire was thrown up and the whole area cordoned off by American soldiers, the first rumour was that de Gaulle and Giraud were to meet.

Then rumour believed that President Roosevelt and Mr Churchill were to be the conferring statesmen. Finally, Casablangans decided it was all bluff. If any statesmen were meeting, the meeting place was somewhere else and all the elaborate preparations were just camouflage to fool the Axis. Casablanca had already been bombed once and it was not considered logical that the two Allied statesmen should risk their lives in such a vulnerable place.

That night in the hotel bar, a white and shaken-looking Arthur Mann said: "Have you heard about poor Eddie Baudry?" Then he told me.

The American transport plane carrying Baudry, Mann and ten or twelve other reporters had left Algiers that afternoon. Weather was cloudy and showery and the pilot had decided to fly around by the sea. The trip would be less risky, for bad weather over the mountains might be dangerous.

The transport flew over the Mediterranean all the way along the coast, passed through the Straits of Gibraltar, by Tangiers, then turned southward. As the plane turned, the

weather became increasingly bad and the pilot decided to fly to Port Lyautey on the coast of French Morocco. Along the coast of Spanish Morocco one of the reporters several times noticed flashes of machine-gun fire from the shore. He decided the Franco soldiers were having machine-gun practice or perhaps firing a warning signal to the plane. He assumed the pilot, of course, had seen the fire.

Whoever was navigating the plane made an inexcusable error. He mistook Larache in Spanish Morocco for Port Lyautey forty or fifty miles farther south. Lyautey was near a river mouth, and even on the map it was obvious that its distinctive position made its identity difficult to mistake.

But the transport circled the Larache airfield, put down its wheels and began picking out its landing position. Spanish machine-guns opened up on the American plane. The reporters suddenly saw tracer bullets flying past the window. They realized a blunder must have been made and threw themselves on the floor, or crouched down in their seats. The big, unarmed American aircraft continued to circle. One Spanish machine-gunner trained his gun on the plane. At two or three hundred feet, circling slowly, it was impossible to miss. A stream of bullets spurted through the floor and side of the plane. One bullet hit Eddie Baudry in the forehead. A reporter realized that the pilot still did not realize he had made a mistake. He shouted and pointed at the machine-gun tracers.

The throttle opened and the plane roared upward. But Eddie Baudry was dead. The aircraft sped down the coast and landed at Port Lyautey.

Eddie did most of his broadcasting in French to Canada. He was a good, honest reporter. Night after night we broadcasters did our broadcasts from the same room. While one was talking the others were sitting a few feet away listening. Afterwards we all drove back together to our rooms.

So we radio men knew Eddie well as a frank, fearless correspondent. He did not hesitate to speak his mind. In conferences with the Vichyite officials, the flawless French of his questions coming from a correspondent in British officer's uniform sometimes surprised them. He was as

disgusted as any of us with the political machinations of the Vichyites. He said so in no uncertain terms. In our opinion he was a fine representative of French Canada. His death saddened us all. It was so unnecessary, and we cursed the Franco-Spaniard who had tried to shoot down without warning an unarmed American aircraft.

A couple of days later, Dunnett, Mann and I and a few others, with General McClure and Colonel McCormack, flew up to Port Lyautey to Eddie's funeral. General McClure was taking a personal wreath from President Roosevelt.

Near Port Lyautey on a gentle green hill is an ancient fort, Fort Medea. Its walls show the bomb scars of the brief bitter fight that went on around it after the Allied landing. Near the fort lie the American boys who died in that fight.

Two or three miles across the rolling meadows you can see the blue Atlantic with a line of creamy white breakers as far as the eye can reach along the shore. It is a quiet pleasant spot and on that sunny January afternoon, the warmth might have been the warmth of late June in eastern Canada.

Eddie was to have a military funeral. As a war correspondent he ranked as a British officer who had died on active service. The honour guard of American soldiers took their places. The American general commanding the area was present. A Canadian flag lay over the coffin.

General McClure laid the wreath in the name of the President of the United States. He said: "In the name of the President of the United States, I present this wreath and salute you."

Colonel McCormack stepped forward and said: "In the name of Great Britain and the British Empire, I salute you." Wing-Commander Wisdom said: "In the name of the Royal Air Force, I salute you."

The honour guard fired three volleys. We correspondents filed sadly out of the cemetery and down the hill. War reporters had taken a lot of chances and been lucky. Now it seemed almost as though our luck were turning, with Eddie Baudry going and later other friends, Bob Post of the *New York Times* over Wilhelmshaven and Ben Robertson in the Lisbon crash.

To help pass the time for us, we were taken to the capital of French Morocco, Rabat, a hundred miles up the coast from Casablanca. We had a typical sightseer's view of the place. Through the Sultan of Morocco's palace we went, led by a court official in spotless white robes of fine texture. The Sultan's private zoo held us longer than the fine interior decoration of the throne-room. At the zoo, forty reporters, all more or less known throughout the world, acted like a bunch of schoolboys out on a holiday, looking at the lions and tigers and monkeys. We stayed so long in the zoo that we were late for General Nogues's reception.

Nogues received us in the beautiful resident-general's palace. Its furniture, tapestries, carpets and interior decorations were priceless. It was so beautiful you could understand why Nogues did not want to leave it.

We met Nogues and all his chief officials. Over real 1928 French champagne, and appetizers, we exchanged compliments and talked vaguely of this and that. Nogues attempted to prove that he had fooled the Germans and kept the power in Morocco in his own hands. To a certain extent he had. He had been able to hide some armaments from the German armistice commission. The trouble was that Nogues had used them against the Americans.

Nogues seemed very intelligent, but during the party he did an extremely stupid thing that made me wonder later whether he was as smart as he looked. He was talking with two or three of his officials, not noticing evidently that Merrill Mueller was standing near by. Mueller could speak French and he heard the general say: "These Americans are easy to handle. I can make them do anything I want."

In Nogues's territory, real French Fascism was even more entrenched than in Algeria. All the faults that had appeared in Algeria existed also in Morocco and to be suspected as over-friendly to the Allies meant a quick trip into a concentration camp. I believe it was fair to say that Fascism was most strong in Dakar and grew progressively weaker as you went through Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia in that order.

Rabat was a beautiful little city with palm-shaded streets. From the flowery gardens of the "Oudaia" where French officials and their wives went to sip mint tea and

listen to Arab stringed music, you could look across the river to the Arab city of Salé on the opposite bank, its white houses standing like a cluster of illustrations from the *Arabian Nights*.

We walked through staired streets in the Medina, the Arab section of Rabat, streets only three or four feet wide. Dirty little urchins had their heads clipped except for one tuft, left so that the Prophet Mohammed could reach down and pull them up to heaven.

Behind a white garden wall, bagpipes that sounded strangely like the Highland war pipes were shrilling music for a wedding feast. It rose and fell. There was passion and abandon in the sound. The beat got faster and faster. Another correspondent and I saw a half-open door to the garden. We wanted to look in, but a frightened woman shut it on us so we might not see the unveiled faces at the feast.

But the enforced holiday had to end. Back in Casablanca there was work to do.

First we passed through the barrier that entirely surrounded the villas near the Anfa Hotel just outside Casablanca on a hill near the sea. Anti-aircraft guns could be seen and American tanks were on guard. Over the area fighter planes were patrolling. Casablanca had had one raid and if news of the meeting-place had leaked out, Hitler might think bombing Anfa was worth the sacrifice of many planes.

In the villa where General McClure and Colonel Phillips had been staying, the correspondents filled the rooms and spread out on the terrace. Purple flowers clambered over trellises. Red blooms splashed the hedges. From the terrace you looked along a green vista of garden and lawn that stretched up to the horizon without sign of human habitation.

Morocco was sunnier and warmer than Algeria and we lolled on the grass or thumbed through the pictures of the unknown owner's *Decameron* until Phillips and Captain George Durno, a White House reporter turned public relations officer, began to explain the Casablanca conference.

They ran through the details of the President's five-

thousand-mile air trip to Casablanca, told us how Churchill had arrived first and how, when the President arrived, the two statesmen had conferred from seven at night until three o'clock or so the next morning.

All the usual heads of the armed forces of America and Britain were there, General Marshall, Admiral King, General Arnold, Sir Dudley Pound, Sir Alan Brooke, Air Chief Marshal Portal, Sir John Dill, Lord Louis Mountbatten, as well as General Eisenhower and General Alexander.

We walked over to the President's villa and collected together on the lawn. The President and the Prime Minister came out, followed by Generals 'de Gaulle and Giraud. They posed for the photographers. The two French generals shook hands. Neither looked very happy, and it seemed apparent that some disagreement still existed between them. The American and the British statesmen spoke a few words to them in French. Then Roosevelt and Churchill were left alone.

The President first expressed his regret at hearing of the death of the Canadian broadcaster, Eddie Baudry. Then he and Churchill outlined for us their ideas of the meeting.

What they said was tremendous news at the time. The fact that the keynote of the meeting was the "unconditional surrender" of the Axis and the invitation to Stalin were important. But they couldn't give us the information we would have liked most to know, what was going to happen after North Africa. After they had finished talking, we lined up and were presented to them one by one. For each of us, they had a pleasant word and a firm handshake.

News of the Casablanca conference could not be released until the President was well on his way home. So after much arguing between British and American newspaper correspondents for whom the five-hour difference in time between the two countries meant making a first or a last edition, a time was set for world release. As usual, the newspaper boys tried to arrange that the stories should be issued to the papers well in advance of the time they were allowed on the radio. We broadcasters showed the futility of that argument and the release time was set for all alike.

A big room had been set apart for us at the Anfa Hotel,

and after lunch we got to work. I imagine there must have been forty or fifty reporters present. They sat around long tables churning out their stories on the typewriter. Most men worked all the afternoon. The output must have run well over a hundred thousand words. I wrote the scripts for three broadcasts and sent a thousand-word cable off to my London office to hold until the release time. The cable was for use in case broadcasting facilities from Algiers broke down. It was lucky that I took the precaution. One copy of each story was flown to Gibraltar and filed to London and New York. Colonel Phillips took another copy of each story and flew to London with them. He distributed them there to the various organizations who had correspondents in North Africa.

For the first time in anyone's experience, a great story of world importance was well handled. Nobody broke the security deadline. Every organization in London and New York had the full copy of its correspondent's story by the hour of release.

We broadcasters pondered over the idea of staying in Morocco and trying to do our broadcasts from Rabat. But the Moroccan transmitter was not as reliable as our own and we decided to go back to Algiers.


The big night came. I had received a schedule of three special broadcasts that I was to make in the space of about three hours. Collingwood, Mann, Dunnett and I were all in Kibling's bedroom-studio. Only Baudry was missing. I was busy arranging my scripts for time and getting last-minute censorship details arranged, so Mueller had done my ordinary quarter-past midnight news spot, the broadcast that reaches New York at 7.15 in the evening. The transmitter was working beautifully.

Ten minutes before my first broadcast the air raid sirens blew. At that time the transmitter was shut down when enemy bombers approached. The microphone was dead.

Two a.m.—the deadline—passed. I watched the clock click off the minutes. My broadcast time was over. I yielded the chair to Collingwood. His luck was bad. The raid was still on and from time to time we could hear the bursts of anti-aircraft fire. Mann succeeded him. Then Mann got up

and I took the chair again as my second broadcast time approached. We stayed in the studio all night long until six in the morning. Millions of people in America were waiting for our broadcasts. Three times N.B.C. had tried to call me on the air. But a few German bombers made all our labour useless. Not one broadcast went out of that studio that night. We were very angry. Every once in a while we would go outside and watch the bombs falling in the distance. Some of the bombs fell close enough to shake our building. Two bombers were shot down.

My cable to London had given N.B.C. an eyewitness report. It was read from London when N.B.C. had tried in vain to get me from Africa. Some weeks later it was decided that enemy bombers could not use our transmitter to find Algiers, and we were allowed to continue our broadcasts during air raids. But we all felt we had already missed our biggest opportunity.



CHAPTER IX

TANKS MOVE BY NIGHT

THE battle for Tunisia really began about two weeks before the Allies landed in North Africa. It began in Egypt when the Eighth Army attacked Rommel's positions at El-Alamein:

Throughout the autumn and winter, the progress of the Eighth Army forced the Germans to contend with two problems: first, supplies and manpower must be sent to Rommel to enable him to continue the fight against Montgomery; secondly, supplies and manpower must be sent to the Axis Army in Tunisia to deal with the ever-growing pressure from the Allied First Army. If one or the other of these problems could be definitely settled, the Germans could concentrate everything they had on the other.

The real danger point in the Tunisian campaign came in January. The Germans at the time were sending men and supplies to the Tunisian front as fast as or faster than ourselves. From Christmas until early February Rommel still had a chance of turning the tables on Montgomery. If he could smash the Eighth Army at the end of its extended supply lines, the Germans could concentrate on building up an overwhelming force in Tunisia. They had the opportunity. Our men and supplies had to come thousands of miles by sea. Theirs could be run across the hundred miles of the Sicilian straits in a single night.

But by February when Rommel left Tripoli, it became evident to General Eisenhower that Rommel could not smash the Eighth Army. Rommel's retreat would have to continue. From that moment Eisenhower knew that the Tunisian campaign was won.

The Tunisian front when I went up in January extended roughly two hundred miles from the great salt lakes, the Shott el Djerid in the south, to the Mediterranean in the north. Through the Sahara in the south roamed small

patrols of the French Camel Corps. Moving northward, you found the Americans holding the desert and waste land area around Gafsa and Feriana up to the Faïd Pass. Further north, around Pichon and Fondouk were the French, and north of them the British.

Running north and south through most of Tunisia were mountain ranges, a kind of mountain backbone, the Dorsale. Along the coast were plains held by the Axis. Axis units were also established in the mountains. Mountain fighting is hard, unspectacular work. Neither side could build up enough strength to burst through the other's mountain defences. It was for this reason that neither side ever made the dashing victories that appeared so often in the reports from the desert campaigns in Egypt and Libya. The Eighth Army learned the difference between the two types of fighting when they first reached the Tunisian mountains around Enfidaville and got stuck there for the rest of the campaign. I have never met any Eighth Army officer or man who would not admit that he much preferred desert fighting to hill fighting.

Weather added to the natural difficulties of campaigning in the hills. Only a small number of our airfields could be used because of the incessant rain and the mud. One of the major items of our supplies was the iron netting we used to make runways on our airfields. Trainload after trainload of the netting was needed to make even one airfield usable. Even with the netting some fields were so badly drained that flying from them was hazardous or impossible. I remember hearing early in the campaign of twelve of our fighters sent to one of our newest airfields. Of the twelve planes that landed, eleven crashed in the mud. The twelfth landed with only slight damage.

The mud made movement of large numbers of troops impossible. When forty British tanks were sent out on a reconnaissance from Medjez-el-Bab, over twenty got stuck in the mud and were only rescued with great difficulty. Even in the southernmost mountains, snow fell from time to time and the bitter cold was unlike anything the troops had ever expected to find in Africa.

Before our arrival, Allied authorities believed that by February the weather would have cleared. To their con-

sternation they learned that February was usually the rainiest, coldest month of the Tunisian winter. It was not until April that good weather finally arrived and a big offensive could be launched.

Through December and January the fighting was hard, but it was of minor character. Small units of a few hundred men on each side would fight fiercely for a few hours or a few days to gain a pass or a commanding mountain position. Considering the numbers engaged, the losses on both sides were often heavy. Units distinguished themselves by deeds of heroism, but the fights were not of essential importance, either in the numbers engaged or in the results achieved. The great danger throughout this period was that the Germans might strike one of our many weak points and establish a loophole through which they could send a really strong attack.

The French troops were not well equipped. The morale of some units was not high. It had been hoped that they could hold a mountainous area of the front if they were given some anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons, but their weakness became apparent and they were withdrawn for re-equipment and reorganization. At about the time I arrived at the front, it was held by American and British troops, together with a certain number of well-equipped French units working under British command as part of the First Army.

Through December and January we continued to send up reinforcements, but by the first week in February it was believed that Von Arnim could put 62,000 combat troops on the front and this somewhat exceeded our own fighting strength.

The Americans had only then begun to arrive in the line in any strength and the American Second Corps was still a skeleton affair consisting of the bulk of the First Armoured Division and one or two infantry combat teams, the equivalent of British brigades.

Continual rain and mud bogged down the whole northern sector of the front, but the southern area was much more dry and in the desert around Gafsa rain scarcely ever fell. Possibly because of the lack of east-west railway lines, the southern front had been neglected.

From the beginning it had been apparent that the Tunisian campaign would be settled by the Germans' ability or inability to hold Tunis and Bizerta. So all the material and men we could push up went to the northern front, a front in places only thirty or forty miles from Tunis. The south, as I have explained before, was largely a matter of patrols and reconnaissance of one kind or another.

Now, with Rommel's continuing retreat, the southern front suddenly increased in importance. If the Allies could cut through to the coast in the region of Gabes and Sfax, Rommel and Von Arnim might be prevented from joining up. It might be easier to destroy them separately. With Allied troops holding the Gabes Gap, the narrow stretch of land between the salt-lake beds and the sea, Rommel would be penned up.

Plans were made to rush every available man, gun and tank of the combined Allied forces through to the coast at this southern point. They could hit with a superior force in this area. Two roads led from Gafsa to the sea, one through Sened and Maknassy, the other through El Guettar. Both were flanked by the same range of mountains. Axis troops were known to be established in these mountains and accounts of their strength varied. Both roads led through narrow passes.

The Allied attacking forces would have to move through the passes. Unless they could detail sufficiently strong units to prise the Axis troops out of the mountains as they went, they risked leaving themselves open to a flanking attack from the hills that might cut them off. At the same time, the Tunisian coastal communications ran in a north-south direction and it seemed inevitable that Von Arnim and Rommel would at once rush forces into position to begin an immediate attack from both sides on any coastal wedge the Allies might establish. Weakening the British forces holding in the north, for the purposes of the projected attack, might open the way for a German attack on our vital northern positions and communications.

At any rate when I first learned about it in January, the move had already been decided. Army observers were even sent over from Washington to be present at the offensive.

At this point the plan was delayed, then changed entirely.

I do not know whether the change was made before or after the Casablanca conference, but I am inclined to think it was about the time the President and Mr Churchill first met. In place of this scheme of a major combined attack was substituted another plan.

The attack would be an entirely American offensive, made only by the Second Corps under General Fredendall. No attempt would be made to establish a permanent wedge to the coast, but if the Americans could seize the Maknassy Pass, the armour of the First Armoured Division would be in a position to cut Von Arnim's coastal communications as it desired.

It was raining in the early morning as our little convoy of two cars left Algiers. In the truck that was filled with recording equipment rode Donovan, the B.B.C. engineer on loan to the public relations unit of Allied force headquarters, and Lieutenant Wickham of the U.S. Army Signal Corps. Wickham had formerly been a state trooper at home, was a good radio engineer and seemed like a good man to have along. In our British Army Humber utility car were Arthur Mann, myself and a driver, Stocker. Robert Dunnett was to meet us in Tebessa. Collingwood at the last moment had decided not to come.

The road was narrow. It wound through fertile fields, then upward through mountain passes. In places it crossed little bridges spanning gorges or went winding down along precipices. The scenery was wild and beautiful. Only once in a while would you pass through an Arab village, some of them little more than collections of mud huts. One of them, I remember, was named MacDonald, probably after Napoleon's Marshal MacDonald, and the Scotch name seemed a strange one to describe the little group of Arab houses.

The road was choked with convoys of trucks, guns and tanks. We had difficulty weaving our way in and out of them and at times the road was so narrow that we had to stay in the convoy for several miles. Yet that narrow way was the main artery for supplies going to the front. It seemed as though an accurate bombing attack on certain points of the road would have blocked the movement of supplies for days and left the route one choked-up mass of

transport. Yet as far as I know, no such bombing attacks were ever made. Through the whole campaign the stream of supplies and reinforcements kept moving. All reporters and officers who drove over the road in those winter months came back with the same story, the ceaseless movement to the front, convoys fifty and a hundred miles in length. It made you realize the sheer weight and variety of material needed to equip an army and keep it in fighting condition.

The first night we reached Constantine, at that time the headquarters of the British First Army. We passed the night in an officers' transit camp, then hurried on in the morning. We were still not familiar enough with the front to be sure how extensively the Germans were bombing and strafing the roads, so we began aircraft spotting as soon as we got beyond Constantine.

That meant that one man poked his head up through the sliding door in the roof of our Humber and kept watch for enemy planes. The truck had no sliding roof, but Wickham and Donovan were following us and they would jump from their truck when they saw us leap out. The only thing to do when you see an enemy fighter or bomber is to get out of your car and get as far away from it and the road as you can before the attack begins. If the plane is too near, you flop down in the ditch. If you happen to be near a convenient foxhole, you can count yourself lucky. In ground that has been much fought over the fields are likely to be pitted with foxholes made by both sides. Sometimes it is as well to be wary of abandoned foxholes.

The Germans developed the unpleasant habit of leaving one or two anti-personnel mines in foxholes that they abandoned. A British or American soldier would duck into the hole for safety from an attacking plane or enemy shell-fire, touch off a mine and be blown up.

Spotting for planes is something of an art. Some men are sharp-eyed as hawks. Others never see the plane until it is on top of them. To tell the difference between an Allied plane and a German plane at a fair distance is extremely difficult, even for trained anti-aircraft gunners. So unless you can clearly recognize it, it is better to jump for the side of the road when any plane starts heading for you.

The only time a German fighter ever squirted its guns at

the car I was travelling in, the bullets started exploding in the road a hundred feet ahead of us before we realized a plane was anywhere in the neighbourhood, although one of the other correspondents was spotting at the time. In time you develop a certain amount of philosophic resignation to it all. You jump with a little more care, figuring that it is all a matter of luck anyway. For a time at the front, more correspondents were injured through over-nervousness that made them jump before their car stopped, than any other way. A reporter from some Philadelphia paper, just fresh from the States, broke his arm diving hastily into a foxhole without looking. The plane turned out to be a friendly one. Once I got shaken up jumping from a jeep before it had entirely stopped and the experience cured me of the custom.

From Constantine to Tebessa, we only stopped once for planes. Three bombers came up the road towards us flying at about five hundred feet, but they proved to be American planes returning from a raid.

Under the Romans Tebessa was a flourishing town. Several important roads crossed at this point.

Carthage, of course, stood near present-day Tunis. Most of Tunisia was colonized by the Carthaginians, then by the Romans. In the Tebessa area, as in other parts of Tunisia, you find evidence that flourishing cities and towns existed fourteen or fifteen hundred years ago where now only a tumbledown Arab village remains. Tebessa and Feriana were both Roman towns and at Youks-les-bains, site of one of the Allied airfields, ancient Romans used to come in summer to escape the coastal heat and bathe in the warm springs.

Tebessa is still a walled town. One of the gateways is an interesting old Roman arch, and a well-preserved temple of Minerva and a ruined basilica stand nearby. Except for these, Tebessa to-day is a squalid, dusty, uninteresting Arab town. Correspondents often had to use Tebessa as a base. Some stayed in one of the town's two equally dirty hotels and others in a kind of cottage requisitioned by the army. No correspondent who knew it would ever return to it for pleasure in peacetime.

Our radio convoy reached Tebessa by evening of the

second day. We took one look at the hotel and decided to sleep in our bedrolls instead of risking possible bedbugs in the hotel beds.

Dunnett was arriving the following afternoon. Mann and I spent the morning at American Corps headquarters. The headquarters consisted of dug-outs, canvased over and camouflaged. The tents were scattered through a wood a few miles from Tebessa. General Fredendall was slumped down in a canvas chair looking at the map. He was wearing one of those knitted caps with the little visor. The nice thing about that type of cap is that you can put your tin hat on over it.

General Fredendall was friendly and helpful. He explained the action that was just starting. We were going to begin an infantry push beyond Sheitlax.

Certain infantry units would work their way south on to the Gafsa-Sened-Maknassy road. Meanwhile the whole First Armoured Division would fight its way along that road, take Sened, then Maknassy. With Maknassy in our hands, the American armour would be able to race down to the coast, create havoc among the coastal communications, then slip back to Maknassy or go south around back to Gafsa through El Guettar, rounding up all the Germans in the area.

The plan was a dashing one and, provided we got rid of any artillery that might be emplaced in the high ground around the Maknassy pass, there seemed no reason it might not work. The Axis forces in the hills around El Guettar were not thought to be strong and a quick sweep around their back might be expected to disorganize them.

"It's just beginning now," said Fredendall. "There's nothing more we can do. All the plans are made. All we can do is wait."

I explained to Fredendall that we had some recording equipment with us and wanted to try to get some noises. The General burst out laughing. "You just take your truck down that Gafsa-Maknassy road and you'll get all the noises you want," he said. He advised us to wait until dark before trying to get down the road to Gafsa, about ninety miles away, because several trucks had already been strafed that day on the road.

While we were talking, planes roared low over the headquarters. "Some of ours, I hope," Fredendall said.

Mann and I found Dunnett in Tebessa and the three of us recorded short broadcasts and sent off the records by plane to Algiers. I caught on the record the sound of some of our bombers going off to the battle. We were all nervous and eager. There seemed to be only three or four other reporters in the neighbourhood and here was the start of what promised to be the most important action since our landing in North Africa.

We knew that the First Armoured Division had just made a run of several hundred miles to get into position and we wondered how their equipment would stand the strain.

It took us seven hours driving without lights to make the ninety-odd-mile run to Gafsa. The road was filled with hundreds of trucks, guns, ambulances, jeeps and all the other vehicles that keep an army rolling. We managed to pass one or two convoys, but then we had to stay with one long convoy most of the way. There were inexplicable stops and occasionally we had time to doze off a few minutes until the column began moving again.

At Gafsa we passed through a barrier. After we had identified ourselves, a friendly young officer named Philhower took us out in the desert to the headquarters of the First Armoured Division.

I had first met the Division in Northern Ireland soon after they came over from America. I had made an army-hour broadcast with them and listeners at home had heard the sound of their tanks rumbling by and the voices of their officers and men. Now in Africa I could look up some of my friends and find out what was happening.

The headquarters was a few miles out of town on the road to Maknassy. It consisted of holes of various sizes dug in the ground and roofed with canvas and sand. A sentry woke one of my friends, Lieutenant-Colonel ("Mac") Brown, and he lay on his cot and explained the day's fighting.

The advance had gone about as expected. Opposition had been a little stronger than had been hoped. The forward units were now just this side of Sened station and would probably take the point next day. The Axis forces seemed to be well dug in around Sened. They were prob-

ably not in large numbers, but they had considerable artillery and machine-gun power. Dive-bombers had been bothersome along the road and they had done some damage.

We thanked the colonel and returned to a grove in the oasis just outside Gafsa. With all the transport collected around Gafsa we expected some bombing when daylight came, so we parked under a palm-tree, covered the cars with a camouflage net and went to sleep.

The day was bright and hot. We had breakfast with an infantry unit, a breakfast of coffee and cereal, pancakes, jam and sausage. Then to another grove to get some petrol. It was here that disaster befell us. Leaving the grove, the car we correspondents were driving in, the British Humber, struck a small bump. We had been over a thousand larger bumps, but this was one time too many. The rear axle broke. We had lost our car.

The American Ordnance Unit had no spares for the British auto. The break could not be welded. We could not get a jeep. They were worth their weight in gold at the moment and nobody could spare one. We wired to Algiers to send a new axle by plane. Later we found the wire had gone to Gibraltar and the War Office in London before being directed to the proper person, Colonel McCormack, in Algiers.

It was hopeless to try to take the recording truck out into the flat desert with no cover for miles. It would carry only the driver and one other person and since it had no sliding roof you could not spot for enemy aircraft. The truck resembled a headquarters car—(that was what it was before we put our equipment into it)—and as such, we were told, would draw particular attention from any dive-bombers or fighters we might meet. Our only chance of using it in any case would have been to drive it at night to some point where it could be concealed during daylight, make our records, then drive it back under cover of darkness.

By afternoon we had exhausted all the possibilities. There was no help for it. We were stuck in Gafsa while what we believed was the most important battle of the campaign thus far was being fought less than twenty miles away.

Advance headquarters of the Second Corps was upstairs

in the rickety little Hôtel de France. There we could at least follow the course of the battle. Brigadier-General Porter, a professional army officer of sound common sense, who, like Churchill, was for ever chewing a cigar, and other officers at the headquarters, gave us a friendly welcome. Only on one or two occasions have I heard of instances in which staff officers or field officers did not welcome war correspondents and give them complete information on any action. Usually the correspondents are trusted on the same terms as officers of higher rank. In the North African campaign it was realized that our function was to tell, within security censorship limits, an honest story of the fighting. Since this was so, we were to be helped, not hindered. That was the way it worked out.

The battle had been going fairly well. The infantry of the First Armoured Division had taken Sened station. They would hold it for the night. The armour that until now had been kept in reserve would push on at dawn and hope prevailed that Maknassy could be taken in the next twenty-four hours. After that might come the thrust to the sea.

We correspondents learned that next day we could probably get a jeep ride to the battle and follow the tanks into Maknassy.

We had become acquainted with some of the officials of Gafsa. One of these let us use his own house for our quarters. He had left the house empty a few weeks before when he and his wife had moved in with some friends.

With a hot meal of American army canned rations and a fire blazing on the hearth, we were not too downcast that evening. Even though it seemed foolhardy to risk the recording truck and its expensive equipment on the open desert in daylight, we might be able to get up to the battle in the morning and find some trees near the battlefield where the truck might be brought by night.

We were lying in front of the fire talking when we heard a truck rumble by. Our house was just at the corner where the road from Tebessa turned and went through Gafsa towards Maknassy. Tank after tank rumbled by in the darkness.

"Sounds as though they're bringing up some more tanks," I said.

"Yes," said Dunnett. "It sound as though there will be

quite a battle to-morrow." We lay there awhile with the tanks rumbling past in quick succession.

It went on so long that we realized the reinforcements must be tremendous. But where had they come from? As far as we knew, the First Armoured Division had the only tanks for many miles, and they were all out on the Maknassy road.

"I think I'll get a breath of fresh air," said Dunnett and I almost together. We went out into the darkness.

A huge tank rumbled up to our corner going at something like thirty miles an hour. It skidded around the turn in a cloud of dust and headed off up the road.

But it was going in the wrong direction. As one went around the corner, the next followed. We watched fifty tanks go past up the road towards Tebessa. These tanks were not going at their usual speed. They were hurrying as though the devil himself were after them. Without lights on a moonless night, they were risking crashes and accidents to go tearing through the town at that speed. Why?

For a few moments we watched them speechless.

"The Germans must have swung around and be trying to cut the road to Feriana," I guessed.

It was a strange feeling to see those giant steel monsters appear out of the blackness, swing around the corner and disappear without any word being spoken or any light shown.

Dunnett said: "I wonder if we're cut off."

We hurried to headquarters to find out. The air was thick with gloom. The offensive had been called off. Intelligence reports had reached Corps headquarters that the Germans were preparing to drive through the Faid Pass with a force of one hundred tanks. If the Germans broke through, they could threaten vital positions and might come around and cut off the force that was attacking Maknassy. So the whole Armoured Division was being withdrawn. The tanks had been sent off at ten o'clock at night to make a run of more than a hundred and fifty miles before dawn. They must swing far around northward through Feriana to be in position to repel the enemy tank thrust that was expected at first light.

At the last minute the smash that might have been one of

the most spectacular of the campaign had been cancelled on orders from above.

We felt as badly about it as the Corps officers. When you are on any part of the front, that part of the front becomes the most important to you. We were as keyed up as the officers for the action that was to have begun next day.

We trailed back to our house, broke the bad news to the rest and went to sleep.

Next day we learned that the expected attack by the Germans at Faïd had not taken place. But it soon became evident that our attack on Maknassy was also cancelled for good. The American armour had covered a good deal of ground in the last week or two. Spare parts and supplies had not yet come up and the Division would not be in condition to return to Sened, fight a battle, and then carry out the idea of raiding the coast.

The Division must reorganize and re-equip before its next effort. I knew how disgusted the tank men must be. Only the day before I had asked one of the officers what he thought about the possibility of being cut off in his coast raid. He said: "We don't mind. We've got three days' rations. We can go to the coast, smash up anything we see and make our way back through El Guettar."

Only a couple of batteries of field artillery and a battalion of infantry had been left in Sened to cover the rearward movement. The battle was over. Eventually they too came out and the Axis re-entered Sened without a fight. The positions returned to what they were before our offensive began.

As day after day went by without any development in the supposed threat to Faïd, it seemed to us correspondents that perhaps we had been outguessed by the Germans. Perhaps they realized the power of our blow at Maknassy and had tricked our Intelligence with a threat to Faïd so that we should stop the battle.

We stayed another week in Gafsa. The whole front had suddenly become quiet. But we were learning something of the viewpoint of the American officers and men, and for us as broadcasters that was important. The local French officials were charming. The *Contrôleur des Finances*, Monsieur Allard, and his wife had lent us their house. We were

the first Americans they had ever met and we liked one another instantly. In the evening they would sometimes come to share our army rations of foods like cheese and butter they had not tasted for many months. The assistant *Controleur Civil* of Gafsa, Monsieur Martin, had been very helpful to us and we struck up a fast friendship with him and his pretty, dark-haired wife, who was a Sorbonne graduate and had studied in England. There were other officials in the town who both then and later showed their sincere friendship for their American and British allies.

The Arabs of Tunisia were a mixed lot. Some were very friendly to the Americans. Others helped the Axis. American fliers who force-landed behind the enemy lines came back with two different types of story. In some cases, the Arabs concealed them, helped them get to safety and would take nothing in payment. In other cases, the Arabs tried to betray them to the Germans.

Some of the colonists and officials deeply distrusted the Arabs as a thieving, treacherous lot. Others stoutly defended the majority of Arabs. I was discussing the appointment of Peyrouton as Governor-General of Algeria with one of the former.

The official said: "We like Peyrouton in Tunisia because when he was here, he was so tough with the Arabs. Good old 'Whisky' Peyrouton showed them no mercy, ever. That is the way to treat them."

We did have one interesting experience in that dusty town with its green oasis. On the main street one day we met three officers in British battle-dress. They all wore long beards. They were the first members of the Eighth Army to come through to the Americans at Gafsa.

Members of the Long Range Desert Patrol that ranged far out in the desert for weeks at a time, their scout-cars had been shot up by German planes twenty-five miles out in the desert. Leaving the rest of their party behind, the officers had tramped into Gafsa and were now hunting for some jeeps to go out and pick up their men. I believe they later obtained the jeeps at Corps headquarters.

One young New Zealander with a flowing blond beard told me of their work, how they went hundreds of miles on scouting trips through trackless desert wastes. They gained

information, attacked lonely Axis outposts, cut communications, and otherwise made themselves a nuisance to the Germans and Italians.

We all sent dispatches on our meeting with the first men to arrive from the Eighth Army. They were passed by censorship and went to our offices. Then the Eighth Army complained because, for correspondents with that army, the work of the Long Range Desert Group was taboo. So no more accounts of the group went out.

Men from General Leclerc's Fighting French Army that had come across the desert in an amazing march from Equatorial Africa also appeared in Gafsa. I missed them, but an American officer told me several of the Fighting Frenchmen had been behind the German lines, had blown up thirty aircraft on the Gabes airfield, and had successfully sneaked through the lines to the safety of Gafsa.

But I had to get back to Algiers and my regular broadcasts. I got a jeep-ride to Tebessa. Then I spent a morning on the Youks-les-Bains airfield. A cold wind swept the field. The ground was so hard the men had to use a power-digger to make their foxholes. But they seemed to thrive on the life and I lined up with them for a fine meal of steak and spinach, potatoes and fruit.

The padre of the unit was a Roman Catholic priest from Philadelphia. When I asked him what had been happening at the field lately, he said, quite simply: "Oh, nothing much but the usual bombing and strafing."

The field was attacked so often that being bombed and strafed had become normal to the men. Anything else was abnormal.

With A. J. Liebling, of the *New Yorker*, an old friend from Paris days, I caught a ride on a transport. It was taking some American fighter-pilots who had been in action every day for two months, back to Morocco for a rest.

Twelve of the big transports landed on Youks with a fighter escort. We took off and formed up. The twelve transports looked imposing. Our first stop was to be Algiers, but through some mix-up in orders we landed at a lonely airfield in Central Algeria. It was too late to make Algiers that night. We lined up and ate with the staff of the airfield. We slept in the plane. When a plane is in the air, its

floor is level. On the ground, the floor slants sharply downward towards the tail. We stretched out, eight of us, across the floor of the C-47. The night air was ice-cold. We woke some time before dawn to find that we had slid down and were mixed up in one mass towards the tail. It was an uncomfortable experience. I was still cold and tired when our plane detached itself from the rest and landed at Maison Blanche airfield, just outside Algiers.

CHAPTER X

KASSERINE SCHOOLING

By the second week in February we had announcement of one of the first results of the Casablanca conference. General Eisenhower called us into his office at headquarters to tell us that he had just been appointed Commander-in-Chief of all Allied Forces in North Africa.

The Eighth Army was then in front of the Mareth line and this army had come under Eisenhower's command. Promotion to full general had come with the appointment. Eisenhower was still wearing the three stars of a lieutenant-general when he received us. He had learned of the promotion when a friend heard it announced on the radio and telephoned him.

Eisenhower told us the Allies had started the war with a determined effort to place the command on a unified basis. The campaign, he said, was a unique experiment conceived from the beginning as an Allied effort.

"The British adopted our idea of one job, one man," General Eisenhower emphasized. "The only people I've ever had to call for stepping outside the line are Americans. The British have never deviated from the spirit of the thing or failed to recognize the authority of the Allied commander-in-chief."

The new unified command was well set up. General Alexander, whose brilliant military brain had been responsible for the success of the Eighth Army, became Eisenhower's deputy-commander. Admiral Cunningham commanded the sea-forces and Air Chief Marshal Tedder took over air control of the whole Mediterranean area. The American General Spaatz was tactical air-commander in the North African theatre.

Alexander would establish his combat headquarters near the front. There was a certain amount of overlapping and divided authority. Thus General Clark's American Fifth Army in the rear areas did not come under Alexander.

Admiral Cunningham was Eisenhower's naval assistant, but also commanded Mediterranean forces about whose use Eisenhower had nothing to say. Tedder commanded air forces in Egypt which did not enter the picture. But in practice the new arrangement meant a concentration of all Allied air, sea and land power in the Mediterranean on one job, driving the Axis out of Tunisia.

General Eisenhower had more British than American troops under his command. At this time Fredendall's American Second Corps formed part of the First Army under General Anderson. The French at that time were non-existent at the front while they were being brought back for re-equipment.

General Eisenhower looked pleased and we correspondents were pleased as well. When talking about him among ourselves we always referred to him by his nickname, "Ike," but that was a sign of affection rather than disrespect. His thought was quick and his speech direct. What he said made sense and every one agreed he knew his job. If he was not very well informed on French politics, that was really more than could be expected and he had diplomatic advisers, Murphy and the British representative, Harold MacMillan, who were supposed to explain everything. For the job of commander-in-chief we could not think of a better man.

The weather was still not good and the Allies were straining every nerve to get up reinforcements for a hard smash at the Axis the moment the weather permitted.

It was at this point that Rommel made the only really dangerous Axis effort of the campaign. Rommel had followed a long and bitter road. More than fifteen hundred miles he had been driven from Alamein to the Mareth line. Always at his heels pressed Montgomery. Time after time Rommel fought and slipped away. Montgomery never gave him a chance to rest and never made the slip that would have given Rommel a hope of victory. Rommel had lost men and tanks. Now he was in Tunisia. His rear defences looked secure. He would see what could be done against these new opponents, the British and Americans of the First Army.

His own army had been hard-driven. He still had the

remnants of the Tenth, Fifteenth and Twenty-first Panzer Divisions. The Twenty-first received some new tanks and other equipment.

If Rommel could strike a blow hard enough to disorganize the First Army seriously, he might gain a breathing space of a few weeks or even a few months. The German High Command was sending him reinforcements. They believed Tunisia could be held. Rommel himself may not have thought so.

It is perhaps significant that he left Tunisia before the debacle. But now he had his chance to delay the end and win at least a moral victory.

When he picked his place to attack, Rommel chose to hit the Americans for two very natural reasons: first, the weather in the southern area would permit the movement of large mechanized forces, and secondly, the Americans in general were more inexperienced in warfare than the British.

Battle experience is a factor no commander can disregard. The Americans had plenty of spirit, but they still lacked that vitally important type of experience. In the south, Rommel knew all about Montgomery's troops. In the north, the British had picked up a good deal of battle experience during the winter. Only the Americans were the new boys in that hard Tunisian school of war. Now they were to learn some lessons.

The Americans were strung out on a long front. Behind them, as behind the British farther north, were practically no reserves. If Rommel could break through he might find easy going behind the front lines.

Patrols increased all along the front, a usual sign of a coming attack. At dawn on February 14th Rommel struck. German tanks, infantry and artillery, supported by dive-bombers, aimed a two-pronged thrust, the northernmost one starting from the Faïd Pass rolled along the road from Faïd to 'Sbeitla, the southern, beginning south of Faïd, crossed the main Faïd-Gafsa road and continued in an obvious attempt to make contact with the northern thrust.

The strength of the German attack did not seem at first to have been realized. A force of fifty-two American tanks

from the First Armoured Division was sent to stop the thrust. They ran on to an artillery concentration that hammered the entire force to pieces.

Later, only two tanks escaped from another force of the same size that committed the same mistake. The lesson was a hard one. By nightfall the two German thrusts had made about eighteen miles' progress.

The German success immediately threatened to cut off Gafsa. Only one infantry battalion had been left to defend this town and its commander had orders to retire at the first sign of a strong attack. Now he was ordered to withdraw immediately.

In the middle of the night of the 14th, the Americans told every French civilian in Gafsa that they would be evacuated if they wished. Only five Frenchmen and one French woman refused to accept this offer. Two were believed to favour the Axis, two were officials, and the fifth an elderly man who said his home was Gafsa and he did not want to leave. The woman was the wife of an official. Before dawn all the civilians, several hundred of them, had been taken to Tebessa and safety.

Giving up Gafsa meant opening the way to Feriana and our two most important fighter-bases on that part of the front, the Telepte airfields.

In his initial drive, Rommel's forces had succeeded in overrunning American artillery. This may have been due to lack of experience, but Colonel McCormack told us that his own battery had been overrun in the first world war after three and a half years of battle experience.

By the 16th, the Germans had made a total advance of about thirty-five miles and the Americans were scrambling back to try to form some defensive line on the only positions that could be defended at all, the line of mountains running from north-east to south-west, north of Feriana and west of Kasserine.

We had been threatening Rommel's possible line of retreat northward along the Tunisian coast. In two or three days' fighting he abolished that threat, wiped out the possibility that we could attack him and sent us back to the hills on the defensive.

The Germans swarmed over many square miles of new

territory and occupied Feriana, Kasserine and Sbeitla. But headquarters, while not optimistic, nevertheless betrayed no sign of pessimism. Our lines of defence had been too extended. We had managed to bluff it out for several months. Then Rommel took advantage of a plain fact and drove us back to a shorter line that everyone was confident we could defend. It had been a question, indeed, at the beginning of the campaign whether we should originally take the positions we now held or push on to the more dangerous thinner line we held at the time of Rommel's attack.

Our withdrawal in the south caused some rearrangement in the north and the line all the way up began to fall back slightly.

At that time people around headquarters were saying: "Well, the Eighth Army will be coming along soon and Rommel will have to fall back."

I pointed out in a broadcast that the Eighth Army would probably prefer not to have so much ground to manoeuvre in.

The American tank officers had fallen into the usual German traps. The Eighth Army had done the same thing in the past. A strong formation of Allied tanks would see two or three German tanks in the distance. Off would dash the Shermans in pursuit. The German tanks in their flight would cut across the field of fire of a concealed battery or two of eighty-eight millimetre guns, which would promptly pick off the American tanks.

Before the battle began, a warning had been issued to all armoured units against just this trick, but as I said at the time, it was one thing to read a printed order. It was another to take it to heart when you were looking through the eye-slits of a tank and saw some enemy tanks you wanted to get at fleeing just ahead of you.

By the 18th we were back on the hill line and Rommel was deciding what to do next. He held the whole plain now. We overlooked him from the hills. There is little doubt that he inflicted more damage and incurred fewer losses than he had expected when he began his attack. Under such conditions, the natural move was to continue the attack. In front of him were several passes through the

hill line. The broadest was the opening just opposite Kasserine, the Kasserine Gap. On the 18th Rommel sent a few tanks against it. They met some resistance and turned back.

At this point, lack of experience lost us the pass. In the rush back, one of the first necessary moves was to prepare the high ground on both sides of the pass with anti-tank weapons. This was done. But the officer in charge of the defence of the pass failed to occupy still higher ground behind and above his own positions.

German infantry climbed on to these highest points at night and found them vacant. In daylight they could fire down on the anti-tank defences below. The Americans were swept by continual fire which they could not return. It was death to stay. They moved out. The Germans had opened with heavy artillery fire. Now that the pass was taken they sent six medium German tanks through the pass itself. They succeeded in getting through into the plain beyond.

At this point headquarters began to get pessimistic. If the Germans could push through a strong tank force, they could outflank all our northern defences and force a general retreat. Big ammunition and supply dumps that we had prepared looked vulnerable. Some of the nearest we began to blow up. The possibility loomed dangerously near that we would have to form a new front back in Algeria. You began to hear a gloomy type of joke, people asking whether Rommel had yet arrived in Constantine. Even correspondents began to wisecrack, only among themselves of course, about wiring Casablanca for hotel rooms.

To the French and to officers of our own army who might not know as much as we did, we professed perfect confidence that everything was going according to plan.

Rommel quickly followed up his advantage. He sent through the gap a force of tanks estimated at about thirty, followed by field artillery, and German and Italian infantry supported by armoured cars. This force swung north-westward heading towards Tebessa, only about forty miles away. While this force was engaging the Americans, a larger force of approximately forty tanks came through the gap and swung almost due north towards what Rommel believed was the American left flank.

At the same time Rommel was attacking the next mountain pass further north.

If the Tebessa attack were successful Rommel would stand a good chance of nipping Second Corps headquarters. Headquarters hastily began to pack up. If the drive towards Thala were successful, the Germans were likely to get behind all our defences, wreck our northern communications and force us out of the north line we had held so long.

What happened then is certain. But who really saved the battle is a question which has been hotly argued. The fact is that both the British and Americans had a hand in it.

First, the drive towards Tebessa was stopped short. The Americans had hit their fighting stride and anti-tank guns and artillery of the First Infantry Division drove the thrust right back to the gap. If you get a First Division man, he will argue that Rommel could not afford to leave his northern thrust out when the First Division had given the north-western thrust such a beating and was threatening his line of communication through the gap.

On the other hand, the British will argue that they did rush tanks down to Thala and that in co-operation with American units these tanks played an important part in stopping the chief German thrust two or three miles short of Thala itself. Both are right and you can take your choice.

The chief thing is that Rommel's thrusts were stopped, and he found that, instead of being through the defences, they became tougher every mile.

The northward thrust came against American artillery and units of the British Sixth Armoured Division just equipped with the big American Sherman tanks. Rommel's tanks were stopped. Back near the Kasserine Gap, American anti-tank gunners and infantry were still in position to threaten the pass itself. The tanks turned in the night and began heading back into the gap.

The Germans had lost their one big attempt to break through the Allied defences. From now on they would be fighting a battle whose outcome would be inevitable defeat.

But up in the north, Von Arnim had begun a series of vicious stabs at our northern front, perhaps to relieve the pressure on Rommel, perhaps in the hope of achieving a double break-through in north and south.

More than six weeks later, I was driving through Hunt's Gap north-east of Beja on the northern front. Our car suddenly came into an area reminiscent of battlefields of the first world war. In a distance of less than a mile I counted twenty-seven shattered German tanks, among them two or three of the giant Mark 6's. They were burned out. Treads were twisted and scattered about the ground; turrets were knocked off. Some were just 'shapeless masses of steel. The whole area on both sides of the road was pitted with shell-holes. Larger craters showed where bombs had fallen.

It was an impressive sight, this scene of a German defeat. You wondered how many of the German tanks had been disabled and salvaged beside the twenty-seven that had been left behind.

With me was an American officer who had been with the British on this front at the time of the action, just about the time when Rommel was withdrawing through the Kasserine Gap in the south.

"The Germans attacked through here with thirty to forty tanks," he said. "The attack was strong enough to threaten Beja and the loss of Beja would shake all our northern defences. With the tanks were infantry and the whole attack seemed stronger than the British defences could stand. Then the British tricked the Germans. A British major of artillery went to the commanding officer and sold him the idea. The artillery major had his guns well dug in and concealed. He asked the commanding officer to begin withdrawing the infantry while he and his guns stayed behind. He hoped the withdrawal would lure on the German armour. That was the way it worked out. The infantry began to move back towards Beja. The Germans believed a general retreat had begun and they sent their tank force ahead to try to smash it up. The British artillery kept quiet until the tanks came along the road just opposite them. They opened fire at point-blank range—three hundred yards, two hundred yards and even one hundred yards. Before the Germans knew what was happening, the bulk of their tanks had been knocked out. Then over came the R.A.F. and bombed the immobilized tanks before they could be recovered. The tanks and the German infantry

that was following up pretty well finished off all the British guns and their crews. But they had lost their armour. They had to retreat and Beja was safe."

That is the story as I heard it from the American officer. Later it was revealed that the British 155th Field Artillery Battery was the unit responsible for stopping the thrust. They fought to the last gun at ranges down to thirty feet. Of three hundred men, less than a dozen escaped. They were brave fighting men who should be long remembered in both Britain and America.

Because of their act the only serious northern thrust failed in scorched masses of German steel scattered about the green grass in the gap.

In the south we occupied the Kasserine. Rommel's panzers were east of the gap. We began to prepare our own offensive.

POLITICAL INTERLUDE

*M*ONSIEUR CHARLES had the face of an overstuffed cupid, a short brush of white hair and the heart of a Corsican bandit. He served good food, but it was expensive. At one time it was widely believed that Monsieur Charles employed agents who lurked in the garden of his bistro. As at Monte Carlo with suicides bankrupted by the gaming tables, these heard the pistol shot of the officer who had seen his last franc go for the Benedictine that finished one of Monsieur Charles's exquisite dinners, rushed up and slipped a five-franc note into his empty wallet so that the suicide might be blamed on shell-shock or unrequited love rather than on Monsieur Charles's addition. It can be confidently stated that this story was a canard, possibly begun by the Comtesse de R——, who often told charmingly witty stories on the nearby terrace of Monsieur and Madame Albert. There is more basis for belief in the report that Monsieur Charles recently bought a large farm in central Algeria, and has made preparations for the importation of a large herd of Jersey cattle, all on the mere income of the steadily rising capital that has accrued to him by the innumerable meals of American and British war correspondents.

It was at Monsieur Charles's that Philip Ure, of The Times of

London, and I were dining with Charles Vallin, the Right-wing deputy for Paris, now a captain in the Chasseurs à pied and a member of General Catroux's mission sent by General de Gaulle to North Africa.

Vallin had been with the Leclerc expedition that crossed the Sahara. As we drove out of Algiers while the anti-aircraft guns spurted their fountains of fire at some German bombers, Vallin had been telling us of the difficulties of that expedition.

Mellowed by the remembrance of an excellent poulet en cocotte, we leaned back in our chairs waiting for our Benedictine and coffee.

"Now this is not fair," said Vallin. "I have just arrived here. I meet you by chance, not having seen you in many months. We dine together and I spend all the dinner talking of Chad and the Fezzan. You have both been here since the beginning. What is the political situation at the moment?"

"Wa-a-al," Ure said. "Better, wouldn't you say, Johnny?" "But it isn't as good as people expected it would be by this time. Isn't that right?"

"Take the Jews," I said, "that Washington statement that everything is all right. It just goes to show that somehow or other the information doesn't get back home. There have been a few little loosening of the Vichy racial laws, but Jews still can't practise their professions. They can't get into the University of Algiers. I hear on good authority that the Chief Rabbi here went around to Peyrouton and asked that the racial laws should be abolished the other day. Peyrouton said there'd be a few announcements about loosening the restrictions, but what could the Chief Rabbi expect? The Arabs wouldn't like it. Then the Rabbi pulled out a letter from one of the Head Moslem Muftis saying that the Arabs offered no objection to the reinstatement of the Jews to their pre-war rights."

"I should think that the chief difficulty is that some of the things that seemed about to disappear at the time of the Casablanca conference, just haven't disappeared," said Ure.

"You're a Rightist, an old Croix de Feu man," I said. "You know enough about France under the Germans to know that France won't take anything but a real national government representing all sections of opinion. What have you got here in North Africa? A straight Rightist Administration made up of the defeatist Rightists, the Royalist Rightists, the Pétain Rightists and the pro-Axis Rightists."

"What would happen if you took this gang and put them in power in France?" I asked. "Revolution and anarchy after about twenty minutes. What would those tough workers in your own Paris and Lille and Lyons say if the Americans and the British tried to back a temporary government in France of these people?"

Vallin laughed. "Le mot de Cambronne," he suggested.

"It looks to me as though de Gaulle is getting stronger," said Ure.

"Sure," I said. "The minor people in the Administration are beginning to think it's going to be de Gaulle after all. So what do they do? Sit on the fence, say pleasant things about de Gaulle and get ready to jump on the bandwagon."

"The Americans and the British and your own people and even some of the smarter Vichyites who want to see Giraud keep his job as being the better of two evils have been pushing Giraud to make some liberal concessions," I explained. "People are getting tough. Unless Giraud makes a more definite step towards a liberal government than he's done yet, you may see some people getting hurt. You wonder whether Giraud knows what's happening. He's made speeches praising social justice, class co-operation, work, youth, joy, the army, everything but mother-love and the French Republic. Some people here are really afraid Giraud is going to use the North African native troops, who only obey their own officers, in the same way as Franco did in Spain to crush Republican and Leftist groups inside France. Essentially North Africa is still being governed by the laws of Vichy. Pétain's portrait still hangs in all the government offices and public places. That's the stuff the Cagoulards like."

Vallin said: "What you say is interesting. I myself have no doubt of the outcome. France will rise again, and it will not be through the politicians of Vichy, whether they are in France or North Africa, that her resurrection will be accomplished."

"That is right, Monsieur le Député," boomed André Glarner, the Exchange Telegraph correspondent, who suddenly appeared out of the smoke that fogged the room. Glarner, a Frenchman both Americanophile and Anglophile, used to know more of French politics and politicians in pre-war Paris than most people.

One night Glarner, dressed in his British officer's uniform, began to joke with Monsieur Charles. The restaurant proprietor was struck with admiration.

"For an Englishman to speak such French as you speak is marvellous," Monsieur Charles told Glarner. "But also to use Parisian argot. That is stupendous!"

We all laughed and someone said: "But if anyone of us was born in Paris and lived there fifty-odd years, he too might use the argot as well as Glarner. If he could not, that would be stupendous."

Now Glarner was serious. "I am French. You all know I also feel English and American," he said. "But I tell you truly. If these men were ever to attempt to assume power in France, the people of France would rise as they have not risen since the Revolution. They are used to killing Germans; killing a few politicians so that France could find herself again would not be regarded as a very serious action."

Monsieur Charles, bringing up Benedictine for all of us, heard the last remark.

"The Americans and the British will never learn that the French take politics seriously," he said. "A thousand times more seriously since the Germans came. For myself, good food, good wine, good coffee and Benedictine or a good fine seems most important. For my countrymen, no, Politics is life. A la victoire, messieurs." We took the Benedictine. "A la victoire," we said.

CHAPTER XI

GENERALS DUCK TOO

THE Americans had profited from their hard lessons at Kasserine. They had started by doing badly and ended by doing well. That was a hopeful sign. From now on the commander of the American forces would be able to count on a hard core of battle-experienced units. Around that core he could add units that had not yet had their first blooding and introduce them gradually into battle.

Kasserine had cost us something in men, material and supplies. How quickly could the losses be made up? The supply organization worked swiftly. Tanks to replace those broken by the German guns came immediately from hundreds of miles in the rear. Men to fill out the First Armoured Division came from the same place. General Terry Allen at last had his First Infantry Division collected together from all over the front and working as a unit. The Ninth and the Thirty-fourth, less experienced than either of the other two divisions, were moved into position as reserves.

By the second week in March I got a tip that an important action was about to begin on our southern front. I put on my battledress, got my gear together, and caught a plane for Tebessa. Mueller had just returned from a brief sojourn at the front and said he would gladly fill my regular broadcasting schedule.

The day after I arrived, a group of British correspondents and conducting officers came down to Tebessa from the northern front. My tip on the coming action was confirmed. I was delighted to find that I was the only broadcaster present among either the American or the British war correspondents.

American correspondents massed with Colonel Phillips and some of the other American officers in a kind of villa.

A few of the old-timers as war correspondents like Ed. Beattie of the United Press, William Stoneman of the *Chicago Daily News*, and myself, who had been accredited to the British Army before America entered the war, messed in

one of the hotels with the British correspondents and officers.

The American Second Corps was about to retake Gafsa. At Gafsa they would set up a big supply dump for the advancing Eighth Army in the south. The presence of a large American force so near his line of retreat would probably worry Rommel. It was expected that he would be forced to detach some of his strength to deal with the Americans, thus weakening his defences against Montgomery's "Desert Rats."

General Fredendall had been relieved and had returned to America. The new commander of the Second Corps was the man Eisenhower called "my greatest expert on armoured warfare," General George S. Patton, junior. Patton had a reputation as a hard-driving tank man. In the first world war he rose to be a colonel in the tanks. He had commanded the American troops who landed in Morocco. In the Army he was nicknamed "Old Blood-and-Guts."

Patton's headquarters were in the little mining village of Le Kouif, fifteen miles or so out of Tebessa. I drove out in a jeep with Colonel Phillips. The cold wind bit through our heavy clothing and nearly froze our faces before we reached headquarters.

Patton was sitting at a desk in a big, barn-like room. He was tall, white-haired, and spoke softly. I had never seen him before, but I had heard his voice on a programme N.B.C. had done for the military academy at West Point the previous week. I thanked him for taking part.

"Did General Eisenhower speak about Johnnie Waters?" Patton wanted to know. Lieutenant-Colonel Johnnie Waters was a young West Point graduate missing after a heroic action on the Second Corps front. I told Patton that the commander-in-chief had described Waters's heroism in detail in his broadcast for us.

"Johnnie Waters is my son-in-law," Patton said. "About this action, I can't give you many details yet. It doesn't begin until to-morrow. I'll see you get full details by the time it begins, but I don't like to talk about it until it starts. Too many people talk about these things before they begin."

I pointed out that correspondents were usually told ahead of time what an action was going to be.

"You'll be told ahead of time, but not too far ahead of time," Patton declared. "Look at my point of view. Fewer people know about it, less chance the Germans have of getting information out of people they capture. Now all the plans are made. Everything is ready to move. Nothing more to do here. You'll be told where to go. See you when things begin."

We chatted amiably in general terms for a few more minutes. Then I left. Patton had not at all resembled the preconceived idea I had of him, loud-voiced, swearing, bellowing orders to all around him. He was polite and soft-voiced. I wondered whether the stories of his unprintable language and his reputed toughness on the field were not a kind of act to pep up the units he commanded in manoeuvres at home, a way of shaping unwarlike civilians into a good fighting force. Now he had the responsibility of commanding a corps, four divisions of Americans, in real battle. He had been made independent of General Anderson's First Army. He took his orders like Anderson directly from General Alexander at Eighteenth Army Group headquarters. I wondered how Patton, a good field commander, would make out in the more complex and more removed work of controlling and directing four divisions so that their efforts united into one effort. I liked Patton that first time I met him and wished him luck in the coming operation.

In covering operations at the front, two or three correspondents usually work together. They are usually correspondents who are not in any direct competition. Thus in Algiers, I had occasionally traded information or shared work with Merrill Mueller, the correspondent of an American weekly magazine, *Newsweek*, and Philip Ure, of *The Times* of London. Now I teamed up with A. B. Austin,¹ of the London *Daily Herald*. He had been to Dieppe with me and his story of landing with Lovat's commando had turned out to be one of the best.

From time to time, conducting officers accompanied us on our trips. The conducting officers of the First Army public relations unit were mostly cavalrymen. In the

¹ Killed in Italy with two other British war correspondents, September, 1943, by a shell from a German tank.

Eighth Army, on the other hand, Guards officers prevailed in public relations. Few of them knew much about the press or radio. What they did know was the Army. They would arrange transport and food, take us to the high army officers who knew what was happening, and to places where we could see it happen. We would swap ideas and make decisions together and probably the correspondents took the conducting officers to as many places as the conducting officers took them. But they were helpful and hard-working at their job, which was to put us in a position to get stories and then help us get the stories transmitted back to headquarters.

In a way, they put an official army seal on whatever the correspondents did. In some cases their presence broke down the standoffishness that some army officers naturally felt in their relations with reporters.

The head of the British public relations field unit was Major Arthur Pilkington. He was in a Lancer regiment in the first world war. Pilkington was the huntin', shootin' and fishin' type of Englishman who has officered English cavalry regiments since the time of Hengist and Horsa. Most of the generals in the British Army seemed to have been his hunting or drinking companions around Melton Mowbray. He worked for the correspondents. He would march into a British headquarters, be it Division or Army Group.

Somewhere in the interior would be some unapproachable military deity, before whom brigadiers and lesser fry trembled. Pilks would airily brush aside the captains and colonels guarding the presence, clap the general on the back, addressing him probably as "Old Boojoo" or by some other nickname, and say "Look here, Boojoo. I've got some correspondents, writing Johnnies, you know, outside. They want to be put in the picture. Tell 'em everything. Trustworthy as your mare Dolly."

The military deity would say: "Why, Arthur. Of course, old boy. Anything for friends of yours." And the general would take half an hour off to go over the battle-map with the correspondents.

Captain Sir Gerald Boles, Bt., who had gone on the same tank-landing craft with me to Dieppe, had been in the 17th Lancers, after Sandhurst. Captain David Heneker

had been in the 17th Lancers for some years, until he transferred to the Royal Army Service Corps.

Now Austin had with him another conducting officer from the 17th Lancers, Major Nigel Dugdale. Dugdale had been second-in-command of his regiment which, with the tank-destroyer guns of the American Combat Command B, made up the original Allied armoured force, "Blade Force."

A German eighty-eight millimetre shell hit Dugdale's tank and wounded him. When he learned he was to be sent home to England as a casualty, Dugdale hid away in a French convent hospital. The sisters nursed him back to comparative health. He was still not fit for the strain of armoured fighting, but he pleaded for a job, any job that would keep him in North Africa to see the end of the campaign. He was given a conducting officer's job in public relations.

Everyone was happy at the decision. Dugdale could now go anywhere he wanted to see the most interesting parts of the campaign. The correspondents had a conducting officer with unrivalled knowledge of armoured warfare, who could explain an armoured battle and who knew where and when to search for the most interesting combats.

Correspondents now began to throng into Tebessa for the coming battle. We were so many that the number of words we could send back to headquarters by teletype daily had to be reduced to three hundred. But I remained the only broadcaster.

Early on the morning of March 17th, Austin, Dugdale and I left Tebessa and headed towards Gafsa. The Germans had held more than half of that road. They had occupied Feriana. Now they were somewhere between Feriana and Gafsa.

Part-way down the road, we turned off into a narrow trail that wound across dry wadis and through a desert waste-land. The wide, looping movement would take us to American First Infantry Division headquarters and towards Gafsa by a roundabout route. The road seemed almost deserted. Far behind us the First Armoured Division was making a sweeping movement to cut down on to the Gafsa-Maknassy road.

Ahead of us we could hear the deep, uneven rumble of the artillery. The only planes we saw were our own. In a wadi that ran through a fold of brown hills, we found First Division headquarters.

Major Kenneth Downs was an old friend, a former foreign correspondent. From him and from other officers we learned that First Division combat teams and a detachment of rangers were approaching Gafsa from three directions, north, south-east and west. There had been some artillery exchanges and we had shelled the Axis defences. No reports had yet come in of any real resistance.

Down the road a little way was a hill. The road dipped through a notch. A few miles away we could see the outskirts of Gafsa and one stretch of the main road leading into town. So far, nobody had been over the stretch of road that lay ahead of us. Everyone presumed it was mined even if the Germans and Italians were not defending it.

An American major said: "I doubt you'll find anything left of Gafsa when you get there. I saw seventeen bombers go over and bomb it this morning. I don't think there'll be one stone left on another."

The major's inexperience in the results of air bombardment was almost touching to us who had seen so much of it. We did not want to shatter his belief that seventeen American bombers could in one visit lay flat a town of ten thousand people. So we said nothing. When we got into the town itself, we found the total death-roll from that air raid had been one Arab civilian killed. No Axis troops were killed or wounded.

An armoured car marked with a lieutenant-general's three stars sped up and stopped beside us in a swirl of dust. General Patton stumped towards us in his high brown boots. The armoured car was his own invention. It had an open roof, and its fifty-millimetre machine-gun offered protection against air attack.

Patton smiled in recognition. He waved his hand at the armoured car and said: "I'm using that because the tank I usually move around in hasn't caught up with me yet."

He peered at Gafsa through his big navy field-glasses. Then he lent them to me for a look.

"That's the Sixteenth Infantry going up that hill ahead.

Looks as though they're going right into Gafsa," Patton said.

"Everything going all right?" I asked.

"Oh, fine, fine," the General said. "But I'd feel happier if I knew where the Germans were. As long as I know where they are, I don't mind how hard they fight. But I'd like to know where they are."

Patton got back into his car and went on down the road towards Gafsa. A minute or two later General Terry Allen stopped in a jeep.

He asked: "Have you seen the corps commander, General Patton?" Then he too headed down the road. We had delayed too long. It would be a shame if war correspondents could not keep ahead of the generals. We opened up the Humber and hurried to catch up with them.

Just before the narrow trail joined the main road on the outskirts of Gafsa, we had to stop behind a line of parked cars and trucks. We got out. Another carload of correspondents was ahead of us. Just ahead of the line of cars some American engineers were clearing up mines that the Germans had planted. We stood in the road and watched them detecting the mines. A couple of hundred mines were piled carelessly near the edge of the road. They were American and British mines the Axis had captured and had now laid to stop us from going into Gafsa. Some of the engineers were digging them out of the soft shoulders of the road with sticks. We could move only as fast as the engineers could dig up the mines. An American truck swung out of the line and tried to pass it by going in the field alongside us. Half a dozen soldiers were in the back of the truck. There was an explosion and something hurtled into the air in a column of black smoke. One man, the driver, leaped out, ran a few steps and stopped short. We thought the fool driver had killed the soldiers. The mine had blown one front wheel of the truck nearly a hundred yards. The engine had been jerked from the frame and now lay a hundred feet away. Neither the driver nor the soldiers in the back had been hurt. The soldiers were yelling. They were in the centre of a minefield and dared not leave the car. The driver, whose fright had sent him running from the car, was now standing in the minefield. He had suddenly realized what he had

done and stood motionless, not daring to move either foot.

As soon as the engineers found no one had been hurt, they went on clearing the road. They let the driver sweat awhile until they got around to clearing a path out to him. It was a good lesson for a foolish man. He was lucky to have got off so easily.

At last the road was cleared and we moved into Gafsa, about three-quarters of an hour behind the first troops who had come from the other direction. The Axis troops had blown a huge crater in the road and had wrecked some bridges, but we managed to get into Gafsa without much difficulty.

At first sight, the town looked little changed after a month of occupation by the Axis. Two or three of the Arab houses had been knocked down by our bombers. Except for American soldiers there were few people in the streets. Most of the Arabs had fled to the hills.

One of the Arab policemen in his red fez and sky-blue uniform said: "There is no food in Gafsa, monsieur. If you had not come we would have starved in another week. First came the Germans, who took what they wanted. Then the Italians. They went into the stores armed with tommy-guns. They loaded their trucks with everything and the trucks drove away. The Axis troops brought some Arabs with them. When the Italians had finished, an Italian soldier would come into the store with several of his Arab friends. He would menace the owner while the Arabs took away everything they wanted and destroyed the rest."

I asked about the Justice of the Peace, one of the officials who had stayed in Gafsa. "The Germans took him away with the others," said the policeman. "Only the wife of one official they left behind. She has been crying in her house ever since they took her husband off to Gabes."

The Axis had plundered all the stores and the houses of the French and the Jews. Possibly as good propaganda, they had not robbed the houses of any Arabs who scrawled the word "Arab" on the outside excepting a few who were known to be particularly friendly towards the Allies.

I walked over to the Allards' house where I had stayed last time. It was filthy. Evidently some of the Italian

soldiers had been quartered there. It had been stripped of everything, rugs, furniture, beds. Walls had been defaced and windows smashed out.

I looked through a windowless frame into the house of the Martins. That house was also smashed and dirtied. Thinking of the pleasant evening Bob Dunnett and I had passed there, I felt quite sad.

The Arab policemen told us that the previous night the Italians who were garrisoning the town seemed quite nervous. Early that morning artillery fire was heard on the outskirts of Gafsa and the Italians immediately started to leave. By ten o'clock, two or three hours before we entered, all the Italian troops had left Gafsa.

Austin, Dugdale and I drove back to Feriana to be near Corps headquarters. We sent off our stories by dispatch-rider to the teleprinter in Tebessa and the messenger plane at Youks-les-Bains.

I began my story with the words, "I was the only broadcaster to enter Gafsa to-day with the American forces who reoccupied the town."

At this time Grant Parr, who was down on the Mareth line with the Eighth Army, began to send dispatches to me in Algiers. I was sending eyewitness descriptions daily of the doings of the Americans. Mueller had the regular headquarters material and with the stories Parr and I were sending he could do a series of colourful pictures of the progress of the campaign that were exclusive to N.B.C. For several weeks, N.B.C. listeners heard a series of realistic war reports that the opposition network, having no men with either the Americans or the Eighth Army, could not hope to rival. Parr stayed with the Eighth Army until it had achieved its most important victories. Then when he came to Algiers I went back to the front for the final drive. By this means N.B.C. was able to put out its own eyewitness broadcasts from Algiers for the last two and most important months of the campaign. In the last few days of the campaign our chief opposition was forced to emulate us with their own eyewitness material.

It had begun to rain on the afternoon that we took Gafsa. All night the downpour continued. We heard it drumming on the roof of the French barracks we slept in. The sky

seemed to have opened up. Next morning it was still pouring. Correspondents woke, took one look at the weather, and quite rightly said: "Rain to-day. No war."

Outside we slopped around in the mud. In the road we met General Alexander. He looked jaunty with the red band on his cap in spite of the downpour. General Patton was lending him his armoured car. He clambered in. The car had no roof and I thought Alexander looked somewhat wryly at the sky. In ten minutes he would be drenched to the skin. We knew Eisenhower and Giraud were also on the front and we wondered whether Alexander would be meeting them.

Other correspondents decided that since there could be no important fighting in such weather, they would stay in the barracks and write some articles or go back to Tebessa. Austin, Dugdale and I figured that if we followed Alexander we might run into a story. We watched him go careering off towards Gafsa with the spray flying out on each side. Then we got out our Humber and followed.

The change in the weather had to be seen to be believed. Yesterday the landscape had been dry and dusty. To-day water lay inches deep. Several times the Feriana-Gafsa road dipped to follow the outline of wadis, dry river-beds. In all the times I had driven up and down the road, I had never noticed them. If I had, I never believed the wadis held even in the rainiest season more than a trickle of water. Now at every wadi, a rushing brown torrent swept across the road. Waterfalls roared down in cascades from the hills and went raging through the desert. The river-beds seemed to absorb none of it and the size of the streams was increasing every hour.

The main road to Gafsa had a hard surface. In places it was crossed by streams one and two feet deep. At one such crossing, an American jeep had stopped. I knew the driver, He was a messenger who had driven over that road so many times he could have done it with his eyes shut.

He said: "I don't think you can make it in that car. I'm going to try it in the jeep but it doesn't look good to me."

We said: "Oh, we'll take a chance if you can show us the way."

The messenger said "O.K., but mind you don't get over

too far to the left. You'll go into six or eight feet of water just off the shoulder of the road."

We could not see anything of the road excepting where it rose to dry ground a hundred yards away on the other side of the stream. We followed the jeep. The current clutched us and began sweeping us towards the edge. Our driver, Stocker, followed Dugdale's instruction not to use clutch or brake. Water boiled over the running board and half-way up the side doors. At one point we were barely moving, but at last we got across.

That was the worst point in the road, but there were others. Once where we had to branch off the main road, go down a kind of precipice and climb a muddy slope, an American officer stopped us. I recognized him as Brigadier-General Theodore Roosevelt, junior.

He said: "You can't get any further. The road from here to Gafsa is awful." He had a strange accent. It might almost have been an English accent, but I judged it was a Harvard accent sometimes acquired by New Yorkers.

I said: "Thanks, General. But it can't be any worse than the road we've just come over." It wasn't. We reached Gafsa.

There someone told us Alexander had gone to advance headquarters of the First Division out on the El Guettar road. The bad wadi we had crossed was the Oued El Kebir. It bent around Gafsa and we would have to cross it again to get to advance divisional headquarters.

By the time we reached it the water looked bad. One car had already gone off the road and we could just see its roof sticking up over the brown current. All the roads now were lined with trucks and staff cars and jeeps. The division was moving up its supplies. The big American ten-wheeler trucks were the only kind of vehicle that could negotiate the flooded roads safely and they were ploughing through the wadi sending up sheets of water on each side. We made it to the other side, but while we were waiting on the river bank we had seen the water rise and we were afraid we would not get back. We hunted for advance divisional headquarters, but could not find it and decided to recross the wadi before the water blocked us off.

The river had risen. Now, while we were watching two more cars went off the side of the road. One turned over but

the soldiers managed to struggle out. The current was swifter. This time we just barely made it. Ten minutes later it would have been impossible. The wadi rose so high that, for nearly a day, only ten-wheeler trucks could get through.

We learned that there was very little fighting but the Germans were in El Guettar twelve miles beyond the wadi we had just recrossed. Nobody seemed to know whether the road leading to Metlaoui and Tozeur on the other wide of Gafsa was open.

I had an idea that since Gafsa was being prepared as an Eighth Army base we might find some units of the Eighth Army making a wide swing around the Mareth Line and coming up on the northern side of the great salt lakes, the Shott el Djerrid. If this were so, we might meet them down in the desert around Tozeur. Austin and Dugdale agreed the idea was worth trying.

The road was a sea of mud. The road had been mined and American engineers were clearing it. Twice we had to leave the road and go between lines of white tape with mine-warning signs on each side. We barely got through one wadi. The mud beyond seemed impassable and an engineer told us they did not know to what extent the road was mined.

They had not yet had time to investigate. We turned gingerly around and started back towards Gafsa. In the middle of the wadi, our engine stopped. The water was running up against the side door. We sprang out. The water was half-way up to our hips. We began to push but could not make the car budge. The current was running faster and we felt that in another twenty minutes we would have lost the car. As we pushed we wondered whether the current had unloosed any mines and whether we would suddenly go up in an explosion. An American patrol of a couple of officers and three men came along out of nowhere. They were life-savers. We all pushed together and the car inched its way up on to the bank.

That night we drove back to Tebessa to send off our dispatches. We had seen enough to realize that the weather had ended all hopes of a quick pursuit of the Axis forces. On the Feriana road we had waited for an hour in line to recross the Oued el Kebir. Part of the hard surfaced road had been entirely washed away and American army bull-

dozers were tearing a new passage up the bank. No light car could pass the wadi and we ourselves had to be towed across by a friendly ten-wheeler.

Next day was fine. The water in the wadis had dropped considerably and we had no trouble getting down to Gafsa. We poked around the neighbourhood awhile but soon realized the roads were still too bad to make a battle possible for another two or three days. Outside his house in the main street we met General Allen. I had known him for several months and I introduced Dugdale and Austin.

While we were talking, the air raid alarm was given. German fighters had come over that morning machine-gunning the town. General Allen began to look overhead eagerly. He reminded you of an old war horse getting the smell of battle. Other officers and men put on their tin hats. Dugdale, Austin and I had left ours in the car, parked half a mile away.

An *aide* brought up the General's tin hat. Since we three had no protection, the General stood bareheaded with us swinging his tin hat in his hand. It was a somewhat quixotic but nice point of courtesy. The anti-aircraft began to fire and we could see the puffs around the enemy raider. The fire was evidently too hot for him because he sheered off.

In spite of the fact that he fought in tanks, Dugdale's greatest interest was horses. He found out that Terry Allen was a famous American army horseman and a polo player of international fame. The general had played with and against officers from Dugdale's own regiment and many other British horsemen he knew. For half an hour Dugdale and the general talked army polo.

When we left, Dugdale was impressed. An intelligent British professional army officer himself, the major had been quick to see the efficiency and alertness with which Allen's division handled itself.

Now he said: "What a marvellous man your General Allen is. He has everything under perfect control and so well organized he can spend half an hour chatting about horses. That's the sign of a good commander. Did you notice that during that time he only had to give two orders? A man who didn't have things organized or wasn't sure of

himself or his officers would have been sending out an order a minute and wouldn't have been able to walk away from his desk."

Tozeur was only seventy-five or eighty miles away down in the desert. We decided to try again to reach it in the hope of being the first to meet the Eighth Army. We were able to average approximately eleven miles an hour on that run. As far as Metlaoui, the half-way mark, we drove in sticky mud as deep as the running boards. The Humber went forward in little bounds squirting the soft mud under its belly. Several times we got stuck and had to push our way out with canvas under the wheels. Once a French army truck hauled us out. Two or three times we met American or French army patrols in jeeps.

The Germans were only a few miles over to our left across the open desert and we did not know when an enemy tank might not come in sight. Water rushing through one wadi had entirely washed away the hard surface of the road. There was no hope of passing, so we left the road, went along two or three hundred yards of fairly dry higher ground and managed to get the car across a one-track railway bridge just about wide enough to take it.

At one point some French sentries stopped us.

"Look out for Axis armoured cars," they said. "This morning three came from the desert on to this road. We fired at them with our rifles and they went away. At the next bridge, go slow. There is a minefield there, but the sentry will take you through."

We reached the bridge about dusk. The sentry stopped us, then led us around an invisible intricate criss-cross path that went back and forth across the roadway.

The sentry laughed. "*Attention*," he said. "*Les mines*."

As night fell the road became more dry and we could make better time. There was no sound except our own engine in the desert night. The stillness when we stopped was eerie.

The moon gave us some light, enough to see a barrier, a pole laid across the road between two uprights. We could see no living person anywhere around. It would have been easy to lift the pole and proceed. Instead we stopped the car and yelled "Sentinel. Sentinel."

We waited. In a few minutes a French soldier appeared out of nowhere. He saluted and lifted the barrier.

"I was watching you," he said. "This road is mined. If you had been Germans I would have pressed the button and blown you up."

Nobody was abroad in the streets of the big oasis of Tozeur. The only sound was the howling of some Arab dogs. At last after ten minutes cruising about we found two white-robed Arabs slipping along a side street.

"*Où est l'Hôtel Transatlantique?*" I asked.

They pointed up the street we had just come down, then hurried away.

Tozeur had been occupied for several weeks by the Axis. The French Army had taken over the hotel and the proprietor had just returned the previous day. We got rooms and a meal. When we asked for a bottle of the hotel's famous French wine, the proprietor said:

"*Hélas, messieurs. Ces cochons militaires de l'Axe.* We had been saving our wines. When Allied officers used to order three bottles we would give them only one so we could last through the war. Then came the Germans and Italians. They drank all they could. Before they left they went into my wine stores and broke all the bottles. They destroyed and smashed my wonderful bordeaux, my burgundies and my champagne. My porter, who remained behind, tells me it was a sad sight to see the good wine running in a red river across the floor. I found all the smashed bottles yesterday when I returned. They are beasts, these Germans and Italians. I did not mind their drinking the wines. After all, that is natural, but to smash what they could not drink. Ah, that shows what pigs they are."

When I saw John Utter, formerly American vice-consul in Tunis, and an American colonel finishing their dinner with a British officer at another table, I thought I was on the trail of something interesting. Why should an American official be conferring in this out-of-the-way spot in the desert with an American and a British officer unless something important were about to happen?

Utter quickly stripped me of my hopes. As far as he knew we were the only men from the Allied forces in the oasis. He too had arrived that evening, but he had seen no

evidence of the Eighth Army. He and the two officers were going to Nefta, the next oasis, to see about the distribution of some American food supplies.

Next morning we woke in glorious sunshine. Birds were singing and outside the window some French Camel Corps riders were cooking their breakfast.

We walked through the town looking for any sign of Eighth Army men, supplies or cars, and found none. The streets were filled with Arab men, buying, selling in the market place, smoking and talking together at the doors of the dark little one-room shops, or lying contentedly in the sun. Of women there was not a trace. They were all inside their houses.

Water rippled among the tall palm-trees and greenery of the oasis. This whole southern area had had its heaviest rainfall for six years. We made the acquaintance of an old Frenchman, the head official of the post office, telephones and telegraph. With his white vandyke beard, his flowing Arab robe and his beret cocked over one eye, he cut a dashing figure. With him we climbed a Moslem tower, the highest in the town, and looked out over the town where 20,000 Arabs were jammed together in windowless mud dwellings piled tier upon tier in mass like a huge ant-hill. Beyond the oasis we could see the salt lake, the Shott el Djerid. It was filled with water glistening in the sun. No cars or tanks would be crossing that great barrier for some time to come.

The road back was uneventful. Once in a while we would see small wandering groups of Arabs with their camels and wives, children and household possessions moving across the desert. Occasionally a French Camel Corps patrol would appear on the skyline. The hot sun was drying up the water quickly. This was the sandy, brown, treeless, grassless desert that most of us, in our innocence, had imagined all North Africa to be.

We stopped for lunch in the open desert. A lizard slithered by my foot and popped into a hole. The case of British compositions we opened had some cans of sardines.

The sardines had been caught and packed in my own State of Maine. The names North-east Harbour, Eastport and Boothby Harbour on the cans gave me a strange feeling

of nostalgia. Here in the Tunisian desert I was eating fish that had been caught off my own coast so many thousands of miles away. It had been nearly five years since I had seen Maine. I wondered whether any of my Long Island fishermen friends, Bucko Dorsey, Boog Doughty, Raymond Ricker and the rest, had caught them. They would laugh to know where those Maine fish had been eaten.

Back in Gafsa, we checked up on operations. Nothing but occasional skirmishes and exchanges of artillery fire. We decided again to spend the night in Tebessa. An hour after we left, Major Downs was looking for us. We were far away, and missed the chance of being the only reporters present at one of the neatest actions of the campaign up to that date.

It was never intended that the American forces who took Gafsa should push down the road to Gabes to catch Rommel in the rear and link up with the Eighth Army. These troops had one order: Take Gafsa, guard it, and establish there a supply base for the Eighth Army.

Misconceptions arose later among the commentators who master-minded the war from air-conditioned studios in New York. Looking at the map, they assumed the Americans would try to go through to the sea.

But Eisenhower and Alexander knew what they were doing. There would be important work for the Americans in the final push in the north. Better now to wait and not risk heavy casualties and resultant disorganization on an unimportant venture. The very fact that the American forces were so close to his line of retreat would force Rommel to keep part of his army opposite them and so weaken his defences opposite the Eighth Army. It all worked out as the Allied commanders expected.

General Terry Allen took Gafsa. The town itself was not a defensible position. Three mountain ranges, Orbata, Chemsî and Berda, flanked the vital road leading to Gabes. If the American infantrymen could establish themselves in these hills they could defend Gafsa until the cows came home. But now the mountain ranges were occupied by the Axis. They had well-protected rock gun emplacements. Digging them out of the hills would be a long, wearing, and perhaps costly business. Yet Allen knew and said that it must be done if Gafsa's defence was to be made certain.

At six o'clock on the night of Saturday, March 20th, General Allen got the go-ahead order. He immediately called all his staff officers into a room in headquarters, ordered the doors locked, and revealed his plan. The enemy from their caves and foxholes commanded the two valleys with artillery and machine-guns. They must be struck quickly by surprise or the price of getting them out would be high.

The job would be done by the 18th and 26th Infantry Regiments and by the Rangers. That night the men set out. They climbed into the mountains and all night made their way through the range behind the Axis positions. At the specified times, four and six in the morning precisely, they drove into the unwary Axis troops with flanking attacks. At the same time other First Division units blasted their way right up the valley. The drive was perfectly co-ordinated. The Italians who garrisoned the hills were caught half-dressed, their mess tables set for breakfast. Most of the Italians were from the Centauro Division, remnants of the Italian mechanized divisions that fought at Alamein now turned into infantry. They surrendered in droves before the vicious American onslaught out of the night. Some fought, and one American unit had the novel experience of cleaning up machine-gun posts behind it while at the same time attacking an objective two miles ahead.

By early afternoon the First Division had advanced twenty-two miles in a single day. I was in an artillery observation post on top of a little hill a couple of miles beyond the oasis village of El Guettar. General Allen and General Roosevelt were there watching an artillery duel when they got word that two of the three objectives set for next day, Monday, had already been taken and the third was expected to fall at any time.

In the position beside me a sergeant was looking through a telescope and making notes of what he could see on the hills up the valley still held by the Axis forces. A Ranger officer was watching the mouth of the valley for the first sign of the return of the Rangers who were doing a reconnaissance far ahead. He was proud of the Rangers.

"I know just as many Rangers will come back through that valley as went up," he said. "Killed or wounded,

maybe. But they'll come back. The Rangers never leave one of their men behind.

There has been a lot of discussion about the value of picked assault troops like Commandos and Rangers. Some argue against them on the ground that an ordinary infantry unit coming up against a bit of difficult work or a dangerous obstacle may regard it as work for the Commandos and sit down and do nothing about it until the Commandos arrive. The Canadians believe they can train all their combat troops to commando standard. On the other hand, commando training has raised the training level of both British and American infantry. If commanders and troops do not get too dependent on Rangers and Commandos for doing rough work, it still seems that useful work such as reconnaissances and raids behind enemy lines can be found for men with the training and the high morale of both the Commandos and the Rangers.

In their night attack, the Americans took something like twelve hundred prisoners besides the number killed, as compared with American casualties of less than a hundred.

I told General Roosevelt I had just seen several truckloads of prisoners being brought in.

He laughed and said to one of his officers: "Look them over, will you. Let's try to find a cook among them who can make a good meal out of army C rations.

Allen himself had just had a narrow escape. Thirty Messerschmidts and Junkers 88's had come over El Guettar while I was in the oasis. We dived into a convenient ditch filled with inconvenient cactus plants. Allen had been inspecting one of his artillery positions when a German bomber got a direct on it. Fifteen men were killed or wounded and a gun was blasted to pieces, but Allen himself was not scratched.

Just a month ago, Rommel had been thrusting towards Thala and Tebessa on the other side of the Kasserine Gap. Now we held more territory than ever before and a powerful American force was in position on Rommel's flank. Probably the Americans had attacked many days before Rommel expected. He had counted on the impossible nature of the ground to hold up any American thrust and therefore had trusted the defence to Italian troops. It was

about this time that he was injured and returned to Europe. The old fox was going to be safe in his hole when defeat came.

Allen expected an immediate counter-attack by German armoured forces. The general was satisfied. Such an attack would help the Eighth Army. That was the most important thing.

At this time one British regiment was doing most of the reconnaissance work for both the Americans and the British First Army. That regiment was the Derbyshire Yeomanry.

From the start of the campaign they had gone out in their armoured cars and jeeps or on foot to seek out enemy strength and enemy positions. Probably there was no German minefield in Tunisia that hadn't had in it a wrecked car or two with the markings of the Derbyshire Yeomanry. They were highly admired by Americans and British alike for their courage and efficiency. They helped train American reconnaissance units and it was these American units with Derbyshire Yeomanry training that later did the important reconnaissance work for the American forces. It was a valuable bit of lease-lend though it may never have appeared on any balance sheet. In other words it was good Allied co-operation.

While the First Infantry Division was going forward, the First Armoured Division had begun to move. The tanks began to roll as soon as any movement was possible. They had gone into Sened, twenty miles or so from Gafsa on the same day as the infantry attack. At dawn next morning they were attacking Maknassy.

We drove out on the Gafsa-Maknassy road. It was still deep in mud in places. Stretches of the road presented us with deep ruts and high hard-baked ridges hard as rock, that would have torn the transmission out of the car. We had to go off the road when we came to such obstacles, trusting to luck that we would not hit any mines. Engineers had been over the road and made clear paths, but sometimes these became impassable. Then we had to try to run in the tracks of some other car or truck that had branched out and made a new trail through the desert. It was the middle of the afternoon by the time we reached Sened. The whole road had been lined with the supply trucks and tanks

of the First Armoured. A certain amount of dive-bombing and strafing was being carried out on the road. Twice we saw burned-out American cars and once a mobile, tank-destroyer gun that had evidently got a direct hit, but we ourselves were not attacked.

By the time we found division headquarters nestled outside a little pass near Sened, it was a question of either staying the night there or going back at once. The desert road would be impassable at night and we would probably run on to a minefield in the dark.

The Armoured Division had been doing well, but it had met no really hard opposition. They had bagged four hundred Italian prisoners in Sened and after a short skirmish had taken Maknassy. The Maknassy Pass lay five or six miles beyond and they expected to take it next day.

We hurried back to Gafsa. Even then we had to drive the last five miles in the dark. We had decided to stay in Gafsa permanently. That morning I had asked one of the French officials I knew, Monsieur Bacon, whether he knew of any house we could use.

"You can have mine," he said generously. "The Axis soldiers have taken everything I possess, but the house is yours for as long as you want it."

Monsieur Bacon had told the truth. Every window had been smashed, every door taken off its hinges and thrown out in the yard. The water-faucets had been stolen. The Italians had disconnected the bath-tub and made off with the lead piping. They had done the same with the water-closet. All Monsieur Bacon's belongings collected laboriously over the last twenty-five years had been stolen. What the Axis troops had not taken away they had thrown into a big cistern behind the house, family photographs, Monsieur Bacon's *képi* from the last war; his papers were all destroyed. You were amazed at the extent of the vandalism and the effort that must have been put into it.

About fifty land mines were carelessly littered about the back of the house. A couple more were on the floor and one in a dustbin.

An American ordnance sergeant looked at them, made sure they were not yet fused, and piled them into his truck.

They were American mines that had evidently been captured by the Germans in their last offensive. Even without the mines, the house looked filthy and impossible to live in.

Major Dugdale had with him a kind of faithful Achates. When war broke out one of his stablemen who had worked on Dugdale's estate for many years, elected to join the 17th Lancers to be near the Major. Besides fighting in a tank, he looked after the Major's personal welfare, seeing that his boots were kept up to a cavalry standard of polish, his battledress clean and pressed, and his shaving water and tea ready in the morning. This man, Arthur, whose last name I never knew, had come with the Major to public relations. To him had been given the job of making Monsieur Bacon's house liveable.

While we had been up at Sened, Arthur had accomplished a miracle. The house was as clean as a pin. Our bedrolls were laid out on cots or trestles. Water had been heated and stood ready in tubs to be used in the bath. A fire was blazing on the hearth. A table had been rigged up out of an old door. Candles shed enough light to write or read and the windows had been blacked out.

Austin and I wrote stories and sent them by a dispatch rider. As soon as we finished Arthur was hovering at our elbow with glasses, whisky bottle and drinkable water. In a minute or two a hot meal of carefully chosen American and British army rations was served in our mess-tins. As we sat around smoking and talking in the firelight afterwards, we would not have swapped our new house for the bridal suite in the Waldorf Astoria or the Ritz. We stayed there in comfort for several days and, after I left Gafsa, other correspondents moved into that house Monsieur Bacon had so kindly lent me.

Next day, the 23rd of March, we again drove up the Maknassy road, this time to Maknassy itself and beyond. In February, that country around Gafsa had been all bare, brown desert where you would think nothing ever grew. Now the whole valley leading to Maknassy was carpeted with soft green. Herds of camels were grazing on the grass. Flowers were everywhere. Once when we stopped I counted the different varieties in one square yard of ground. There were twelve different kinds. I picked them and pressed

them in a book and later sent them in a letter to my wife. Through some mischance they never reached her. They all seemed very small delicate flowers, mostly yellow, white or blue.

A few times German planes came past us and we jumped for the ground, but we were never attacked. The road was still full of transport going up to Maknassy. Fifty-millimetre or thirty-millimetre machine-guns were mounted on the American trucks and cars as protection against aircraft. Yet a couple of times I saw all the soldiers jump out of the trucks and go to ground as we did. If they had stayed at the guns in the trucks they would have been able to put up a good barrage that would have kept them safer than they would be lying out on the ground helpless. I judged they needed more training in dealing with enemy aircraft. First Infantry Division men, I was sure, would not have made that mistake. What the soldiers were doing was just what an enemy pilot would pray for.

A couple of miles beyond Maknassy, which was just a few houses, we went out in a field occupied by an artillery unit. They politely let us share their foxholes when a German plane came over. From the field we could watch our own artillery putting ranging bursts in the air over the Mezzouna airfield. Our guns had been shelling the field all day, but one or two German fighter-bombers were still making frequent trips from the field. They were a nuisance with their occasional bombs, but that was all.

We had a foothold in the Maknassy Pass itself, but the Germans or Italians still held some of the high ground. Then it looked as though we might break out of the pass at almost any time, but the Axis positions were harder to tackle than had been expected and in spite of some fine actions by the infantry of the First Armoured Division, the pass was never cleared so that armour could be risked in it.

Back to Gafsa we went then to Terry Allen's headquarters in the oasis of El'Guettar. His men that day had fought well. One of his officers told me the General had been as nervous as a hungry tiger in a cage all day long, forced to stay at his headquarters a mile or two behind the fight and eating his heart out to be with his men.

The Germans had been quick to counter-attack. They

had rushed an estimated hundred tanks from the Tenth and Twenty-first Panzer Divisions down to the El Guettar valley. It later proved that the bulk of the available armoured force of the German desert army was pinned down opposite the Americans when the Eighth Army broke through in the south.

At five o'clock that morning a force of fifty German tanks had attacked up the valley. The thrust isolated two battalions of American infantry. Attacked from three sides, the battalions held firm and smashed twenty tanks with anti-tank guns. One American had knocked out three tanks with a "Buck Rogers" rocket-gun, firing at the tanks from point-blank range.

The tanks also attacked our artillery at point-blank range. The attack was accompanied by heavy air pressure and the Germans were quite successful in dive-bombing the guns. Junkers 87 dive-bombers appeared as well as other types of planes. They would come over in the intervals between the time one formation of our protecting fighters turned for home and the time the next formation appeared.

The American troops fought magnificently and the Germans retreated leaving their disabled tanks blazing on the field. In the afternoon the Germans threw a larger force of tanks up the valley. That also was slammed with everything the Americans had. There was no thought of retreating. The gunners and infantrymen stuck where they were and shot it out. All day long General Roosevelt had been on the battlefield.

American losses had not been slight. They had lost many of their guns by direct bomb or shell hit, although casualties had not been high in comparison with the scale of the attack. German tank recovery had been good and recovery units worked all during the fighting right under the American guns, repairing tanks or hauling them away.

The bulk of the German armour had retreated down the valley. While I was talking with General Allen in the dusk, the Germans tried a surprise move, a flank attack against headquarters. We had heard some firing. A messenger came up with the news that six or eight tanks had swung round and come within a mile of El Guettar from the south-east just at dusk. A half-company of American engineers, working in

the neighbourhood, downed their tools, took up their guns and held off the tanks until support arrived to drive off the new threat. During the day's battle the Americans took two hundred more prisoners.

Dive-bombing was to prove bothersome from time to time in that area. After a time, the Allied fighters began to knock down a few. On April 3rd, a squadron of Spitfires caught fourteen Junkers 87 dive-bombers over the valley. They shot down all fourteen. Three of the fourteen dropped among the fighting ground troops. After that slaughter the usual complaint, "Where are our planes?" was not heard among the infantry.

Driving back to Gafsa in the dark, we met a squadron of Sherman tanks coming up as reinforcement. Without lights, they rumbled past us like mechanical monsters. As we saw them tower up on us and roar by, we got a feeling of their power. In cold fact, they were not used. The American infantry had stopped the German thrust and the Germans began to think of their defences.

That night I ended my dispatch with the comment that the way the infantry had fought that day "should make every American proud."

There had only been one unpleasant incident that day. There was a French unit commanded by a Vichyite officer. The French had a large number of excellent French tanks in good condition. At the height of the battle an American liaison officer asked the French commander to make an attack with his tanks to relieve the pressure on the Americans. The French commander gave him a self-satisfied smile.

"I will not move unless you give me one hundred American tanks," he said.

"*Mon colonel*," said the American, "we ourselves have only infantry. If you will not attack, will you at least make a demonstration with your tanks so that the Germans will think you intend to attack?"

"No," said the Frenchman. "Unless you will give us those tanks, not one of my men or my tanks will move to-day."

"*Mon colonel*," said the American, keeping his temper with difficulty. "Will you make a demonstration if I send

some men and officers in unarmoured jeeps ahead of your tanks to show them the way. If you refuse this request, I will personally tell General Giraud of your conduct towards an ally."

The French colonel grudgingly agreed. Six American jeeps led the demonstration. They drove down the valley in the face of Axis machine-gun and artillery fire leading the forty French tanks. By some miracle they were not hit. All got back safely.

Next morning I got out to El Guettar early. I walked to the edge of the grove. All seemed quiet down the road. I met Major Downs. He was preparing to accompany General Patton and General Allen on a visit to a forward observation post.

"Kenny," said Allen, "will you go on ahead and tell them General Patton and I will be right out?"

"Yes, sir," said Downs. "May I take John with me?"

General Allen agreed and we got in Downs's jeep. We rode several miles down the road towards Gabes. American artillery was tucked away in the folds of some brown sand-hills. We parked the car, walked a few hundred yards and Downs reported the coming visit. Then we went back, met the generals, and led them towards the observation post.

It was at the top of a sheer hill. Foxholes had been scooped in the very summit. At our feet was the valley. I counted twenty-three destroyed tanks below us. All were within a mile. The nearest was not more than a hundred and fifty yards away. The whole sweep of the valley with the hills on each side went away for perhaps five miles towards Gabes. The valley rose slightly and we could see the roads winding up.

General Roosevelt was up there. He lolled on the far edge of the foxhole in which Patton and Allen were standing. He had watched all yesterday's battle from this point and he pointed out various phases of the day's activity. Downs and I were in the next hole.

We heard a high rustling whine. Both of us ducked. A shell went over our heads and landed in the road over which we had just come, perhaps two or three hundred yards away.

The shelling went on for about an hour, one or two shells

at a time every couple of minutes. Our own guns behind us were firing back at them over our heads. Up the valley we could see the flash and smoke of the guns. Then would come the whine. We would duck and the shells would explode behind us. Roosevelt continued to loll up in plain sight pointing at the landscape with his stick. Once as I heard the whine begin I looked at the next foxhole. The generals were ducking too. Even Roosevelt's head would go down an inch or two instinctively as we heard that sound.

Below us the troops were stretched out in their foxholes, comfortably reading an old American magazine or a two-months-old paper. Some were stripped to the waist getting a sun-tan.

We were all looking down that sunny valley when suddenly we saw a dozen flashes of flame and columns of smoke shooting up from the German positions. They were far larger than the explosions our artillery shells had been creating. Their appearance was as unexpected as a bolt of lightning would have been on that sunny day, because we hadn't heard our own guns for a minute or two. Then high above the German positions we saw Allied bombers manoeuvring among puffs of anti-aircraft fire and realized what had happened. Our bombers were hammering the German guns. The columns of black smoke made a pleasant sight.

The German shells were landing regularly in the roadway. But I saw only one truck damaged. The rest kept moving along the road in spite of the shell-bursts.

We climbed down the steep little hills and picked our way back to our cars. General Patton stopped to talk with an American private.

"Pretty heavy artillery barrage they're putting up," the private said.

"That's not a real barrage," answered Patton. "That's just some German gunners ranging their guns."

The private snorted. "Well, General. All I can say is if those Germans are just ranging, they are certainly ranging like hell." Both the general and the private laughed together.

CHAPTER XII

ALLIED OFFENSIVE

THE Allied offensive, properly speaking, began on the first day of spring, March 21st, with the American thrust from El Guettar and the British Eighth Army's smash at the Mareth line.

Until the whole Second Corps was moved out of the area, the Americans' progress was to be slow. The First Infantry Division fought brilliantly over hard ground, picking its way slowly along the line of hills that flanked the El Guettar-Gabes road. Other divisions were moved into place and on occasion fought well. But the movement forward was jerky. The divisions were not working with the smooth co-ordination, one unit's efforts taking the strain off the next, that is necessary to develop the potential power of a mass of men, guns and machines. Both beyond El Guettar and in the Maknassy Pass the Axis troops maintained excellent defensive positions. At the cost of heavy casualties they could have been driven out. It was not thought that the results would be worth the price.

In the southern desert of Tunisia, Montgomery's men were exhibiting the brilliance that had made them the best desert army in the world. Montgomery first tried a frontal attack on the Mareth line. He drove a wedge or salient into the line, but could not break through. While the Fiftieth Northumberland Division was holding the wedge under the attacks of the German Fifteenth Panzer Division, Montgomery made one of the moves that showed him to be a great commander instead of a merely competent commander. Fortunately also he had at his hand units so well experienced that they needed hardly more than a word of command to carry out a complicated manœuvre.

The New Zealand Division, containing the Eighth Armoured Brigade and the British First Armoured Division, swung around through the left of the Mareth line.

They broke through in a swirl of dust and by the time the

Fifteenth Panzer could get over to the break, they were far to the north. The New Zealanders under General Freyberg, protected on the flank by General Leclerc's Fighting French, fought. The First Armoured Division went clanking up through the desert to El Hamma, north of the Mareth line and just sixteen miles west of Gabes. The British were thus working on one pivot of the narrow Gabes Gap, the Axis line of retreat. The Axis forces hurriedly left the Mareth line and streamed up through the gap, leaving eight thousand prisoners behind.

The British went into Gabes and the Germans made another stand on the Wadi Akarit twenty miles north of Gabes. This was a less formidable obstacle. The defences depended on a couple of low hills six or eight hundred feet high just beyond the Wadi, the Fatnassa and the Roumana hills. Montgomery laid down a barrage of thousands of shells on these hill defences before dawn on April 6th. Then the infantry seized the hills and by early morning the Germans were hustling northwards again.

American patrols met Eighth Army patrols out in the desert on April 7th. British, American and French forces began to press inwards to the centre of the front. They took Pichon, Fondouk and Kairouan. On the 11th of the month, the Eighth Army was in Sfax, Sfax Le Gaulliste it was nicknamed, and only the misplaced exertions of an American political officer who somehow arrived on the scene prevented local French patriots from cheerily and promptly shooting two or three of the most culpable Vichyite officials. Sousse fell on the 12th. By the 14th, the Eighth Army had reached the edge of the curving shell of mountains inside which the Germans were to make their last stand. In the drive from the Mareth line the Eighth Army had taken 20,000 prisoners.

All the coastal plain was lost to the Germans. Now at Enfidaville, Montgomery's Desert Rats were to meet their first real mountain defence positions, the kind of positions the First Army had been facing all winter.

The Eighth Army had achieved brilliant *coup* after brilliant *coup*, victory after victory. They were a first-class fighting machine and they knew it. They were now to undergo a chastening experience.

More than any other single factor, Allied air power was to set the stage for the coming Allied offensive against the last German stronghold in Africa, the semicircular mountain ring that swings around from Enfidaville up to the lakes that protect Bizerta in the north.

All the winter long the Allies had struggled with bad airfields. The fields had to be improved, supplies and planes had to be brought from Britain and America. Meanwhile the air forces kept up steady continuous attacks against shipping, German airfields and the ports in Italy from which supplies were being sent to the Axis forces in North Africa. Little by little they were wearing down the German air forces. Little by little they were squeezing dry the supply hose from Italy through which had to come tanks, guns, replacements of all kinds.

For instance, on the 10th and 11th of April, Allied air force units destroyed some eighty-five enemy planes in the air, among them sixty-one big transport planes carrying vital supplies. Daily they were destroying planes on Axis landing fields. Daily the numbers destroyed in the air ran into two figures.

When the final push began, the Axis could put only a handful of planes into the Tunisian sky. Through the months and weeks preceding, their air power had been whittled down to nothing. It could not be renewed.

After weeks of fighting, the German Desert Panzer Divisions, with a nominal strength of over two hundred tanks a division, were reduced to figures like twenty, thirty and forty. These were not the mighty panzers that had cut Poland to ribbons, taken France in a month. The same men, perhaps, and the same divisions, but only the gaunt and feeble skeletons remained. Where would they get more flesh and blood and muscles, tanks, men, shells, petrol?

Daily they were losing more trucks by Allied air attack. Transport was breaking down. Ships carrying new tanks were sunk. Whenever they looked into the sky Allied planes were sweeping down to bomb them on the roads and in their camps. Dumps were blazing. The call went out, but the supplies did not arrive.

Tedder and Spaatz had accomplished what they had set out to do, destroyed German air power in North Africa and

choked off the stream of supplies from the Continent to Tunisia.

The Allied air forces were now split into two sections, the first a tactical air force to co-operate with the army by giving fighter protection and doing short-range tactical bombing of Tunisian airfields and German troop positions and transport; the second, a strategical force, to carry out the long-range raids on Sicily, Sardinia and southern Italy. This force would stop supplies at their point of departure, weaken by bombing the industries and ports of Italy. By day and night both these forces were active. The long-range, strategical day bombing was done by forces ranging up to a hundred or more Flying Fortresses or Liberators with their escorting fighters. The night bombing was carried out by R.A.F. Wellingtons. When the Axis must protect Italy against raids like these, how could they afford to send more fighters to inevitable destruction in Tunisia?

We had mastered the North African sky. The stage was set. Now the armies would move.

In about a week, the whole American Second Corps was moved from southern Tunisia right across the British First Army's lines of communication to take up a position on the British left flank facing Bizerta. This feat was accomplished without upsetting the First Army's supply lines and without air attack on the thousands of trucks and cars streaming northwards.

The Second Corps now had its third commander, General Bradley, and contained four divisions, First Armoured, and First, Ninth and Thirty-fourth Infantry. The Americans were still an independent unit working directly under General Alexander at Eighteen Army Group and did not form part of the First Army. Many weeks after the campaign finished, I still found people in England who believed the First Army was predominantly American. The First Army, like the Eighth Army, was a British Army.

This was the way the Allied front was constituted when the final offensive began on April 23rd. In the far north, in the brush and hill country, where not even a jeep could penetrate, were the French Corps Franc d'Afrique and the Moroccan native troops, the *goums*. South of them around Sedjenane and Jebel Abiod, along the two roads leading to

Mateur, and in the terrible hill country flanking them, was the American Second Corps. Their task was to take Bizerta.

Below the Americans the British First Army front ran from the hills north of Medjes-el-Bab down to the lakes north of the Bou Arada-Pont du Fahs road. The British force was made up of the First, Fourth, Forth-sixth, and the veteran Seventy-eighth Infantry Divisions, with the Sixth Armoured Division and the British First Armoured that had been detached from the Eighth Army after the outflanking run with the New Zealanders around the Mareth line.

South of the Bou Arada-Pont du Fahs road was the French Nineteenth Corps and to their right around Enfidaville, the Eighth Army. The task of the British First Army was to take Tunis. The Eighth Army was to work up the coast and prevent the Germans from making a stand in Cape Bon.

Our forces were heavier than anything the Germans could put against us. The numbers of troops actually engaged were not so different, but the weight of our armour and guns and planes was overwhelming. On the other hand the Germans had good defensive positions that would be hard to take.

Some parts of the hilly country and the northern brush country were so bad that trucks could not be used.

The Allied Force found that on one of the original convoys some supply genius had for no apparent reason included a shipment of two thousand saddles. Several hundred mules and burros were rounded up and a muleback transport system set up.

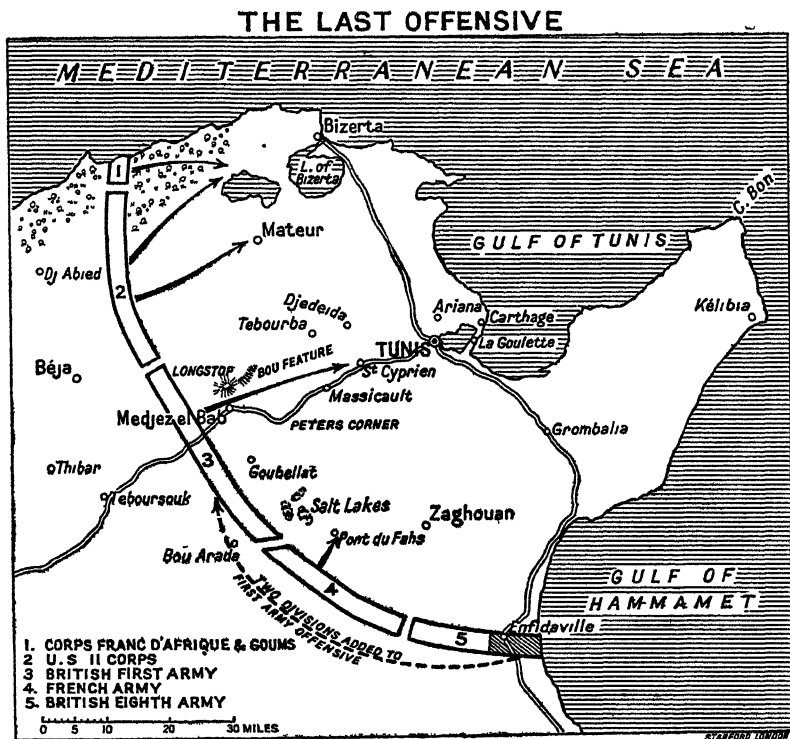
In some of those hills, firing from emplacements blown in solid rock and concreted over, a company of Germans could stop an Allied division from advancing.

The original plan had been to carry out a series of hard punches all along the front. The prestige of the Eighth Army was high among the Germans. If the Eighth Army could put in a hard punch, it seemed probable that the Germans would strengthen that front and weaken the front opposite the First Army, which by that time would have worked up momentum enough to crash through to Tunis.

Before the Allied offensive began the Axis made an attempt to strike first. They sent a tank force around one of our hills known as Banana Ridge. There was some hard

fighting, but the attack was repulsed with severe German losses.

The offensive began before dawn on the morning of April 23rd. Americans and British all went forward and by the end of the day had covered distances ranging from two to five miles. We were then roughly twenty-five miles from Tunis.



Two valleys led towards Tunis. The roads through them joined and the two valleys became one at an insignificant point the British had named Peter's Corner. Before we could move safely down the valleys the hills on both sides would have to be taken. We could not send trucks and tanks and men down the roads while the Germans on the hills were blasting them to bits with artillery and mortar fire.

The hills were huge chunks of rock, lightly covered in places with thin grass. The northern side leading towards

Tunis by way of Tebourba and Djedeida had three hills that were of utmost importance, Tongoush, Heidous and Djebel Ahmera, known to the British as Longstop.

Longstop was lower than the hills behind. Its sides were sheer. The top curved as gracefully as the back of a porpoise coming out of water. At one end the summit dipped, then rose again in a small hillock. From Longstop the Germans could spot everything that was happening around Medjez and direct the artillery in the hills on to it. It was a balcony seat right up against the stage of the Mejerda Valley. The Germans had fortified it strongly and Longstop's mortar fire could cover the road below.

The English called it Longstop for an interesting reason. Little American schoolboys playing baseball sometimes have one boy who backs up the catcher. He gets the balls the catcher misses. In scratch village cricket games in England a player is sometimes given the job of doing the same thing, standing behind the wicketkeeper. He is called the longstop. The anonymous Englishman who named Djebel Ahmera Longstop felt it was the last hill blocking the way to Tunis.

From their solid rock strongholds on Longstop the Germans could shoot straight down at an attacking force coming up the bald face of the hill. Their machine-guns and mortars could lay down a curtain of fire that would be difficult to break through. In their concreted dugouts the Germans would be comparatively safe from anything except an artillery shell that happened to hit the opening.

The Royal West Kent Regiment attacked Longstop in the darkness after it had been shelled by the British artillery. They were shot to pieces in a hammer and tongs struggle. They were knocked down the hill, but on their own initiative re-formed and attacked again at dawn. The remnants were badly cut up. There could be no question of a third try by the few survivors.

Later in the day, the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders, their bagpipes playing, again went for Longstop. Churchill tanks went with them and there were preceded by a creeping artillery barrage. They had to "lean on the barrage," that is follow the bursting shells so closely that they were on top of the pillboxes and gun emplacements before the men

inside dared to put their heads up and start firing. That is a dangerous business, for you may easily get into your own shellbursts. If you wait too far behind the bursts you will probably be killed by the enemy.

The Argyles succeeded in taking most of the hill. Only the little rock pimple on the other side of the dip still held out.

I watched the attack from a hill on the other side of the valley. We looked down across the greenness of the valley, overlaid with purple and white spring flowers. On the lower slopes of Longstop immense crimson beds of poppies looked like gouts of blood.

At first the whole hill was smoking with the bursts of the artillery barrage. Through the afternoon the barrage lifted higher and higher as the infantry advanced. At the end of the day only the one little corner was still puffing bursts of white smoke as the British shells exploded.

One of the Churchill tanks was flaming and one of the few German bombs dropped during the day or an artillery shell had set alight a tiny nearby village. Sheds and houses were blazing fiercely.

We had control of the air, although now and again Messerschmidt fighters would slip through in ones and twos to strafe the roads. We had to jump out of the car several times and once I myself and two other correspondents, Keith Hooper of the Australian *Truth* newspapers and Ward Price, the be-monocled veteran of the London *Daily Mail*, saw Messerschmidt cannon-shells exploding in the road a hundred feet ahead—a road on which we were the only visible target—before we knew the plane was on us. By the time we got out, the plane was overhead and going away among the bursts of anti-aircraft fire.

The Germans were not going to give up readily. Every objective we took was counter-attacked at once. Fighting was bitter and some places were taken and retaken three or four times in the course of the day.

One German prisoner admitted he knew it was all over in Tunisia, but the German troops had received an order to fight to the last and would do so. In one attack forty Vichy Frenchmen were captured fighting on the German side. They were traitors to their country bemused by the years of

Axis-Vichy propaganda. One officer had volunteered to fight for the Germans and had made the trip from Vichy to Tunisia to "repel," as he phrased it, "the Anglo-Saxon invaders." The Frenchmen were handed over to the French military authorities. I heard later that they had been swiftly dealt with. They had believed the words of Pétain.

Of the other two important hills north of Medjez, Tongoush had been surrounded and the British had been fighting all day on Heidous. The two British armoured divisions were fighting in and near the adjoining Goubelat Valley.

American and British correspondents accredited to the First Army were staying at a little village called Thibar. It was only a few miles from First Army headquarters.

Tents were pitched in a grove of almond trees. Except for many earwigs, a few scorpions, and lack of hot water for shaving and washing, it was very comfortable. When we got back after spending all day seeing as much of the fighting as we wanted to, an army headquarters officer, usually the Brigadier General Staff, would come over and explain the overall picture of the fighting. To that picture we could add details of what we ourselves had seen and picked up from corps, division and brigade headquarters we might have visited.

The brigadier felt from the course of the day's fighting that the Germans were putting everything they had in the front line. Headquarters officers did not believe there was much behind the first hard crust. They were later proved right in their assumption.

Fighting continued to be intense. The night of the 23rd the Guards had some strong bayonet attacks and counter-attacks east of Medjez. Only pale moonlight lit up the scene so the fighting men could tell friend from foe.

Tanks, guns, infantry and minefields were used to block the British advance on the 24th and progress was slow through rain and low cloud that handicapped Allied air power.

The Germans were still holding out on Heidous, Tongoush and the pimple of Longstop. The men on Longstop were being heavily shelled and bombed and peppered with

machine-gun and rifle fire. They were still comparatively safe in their dugouts as long as they could keep any Allied infantrymen from coming near enough to pop a grenade into their shelters.

I went with Captain Boles to a hill overlooking the Goubelat Valley. Like Dugdale, he wore the 17th Lancers cap badge, a death's-head with the words "Or Glory" underneath. Having been shelled and bombed together on the same tank landing-craft at Dieppe, we were good friends. We were driving on a back road up to the hill when, with a sudden zing-smack, a German eighty-eight millimetre shell landed about fifty feet away from us.

We whizzed out of the car with no thought of glory but with a death's-head looming large in our imagination; the shell had been so completely unexpected. In a minute or two when no more shells followed, we continued up the road.

We found ourselves in the middle of a British artillery concentration. In the little folds and flat spaces among the hills, we counted about a hundred guns of all types. It was an impressive concentration, all packed in a space not more than half a mile long and perhaps the same breadth. We climbed on a little bare knoll just above the guns, hoping the Germans would not choose that afternoon for counter-battery shelling.

We spent most of the afternoon on the knoll keeping down on our stomachs or crouching so the Germans across and up the valley would not notice movement on the hillock and start shelling it. Allied guns were firing at the German defenders of the valley from three directions. The whole front echoed with the thunder of the cannonade and we could hear the British shells rustling over our heads and exploding in puffs of white smoke across the valley. Several times pairs of Messerschmidt fighter-bombers would run up and dump their bombs in front of us against British infantry advancing on foot up the Goubelat. On other parts of the front fighter-bombers were attacking in fours and sixes. This valley too looked as though it were carpeted with deep green plush daubed with smears of white and scarlet flowers.

Up to our north the Americans had been doing well.

Through the hills they had been making steady, assured progress. To make seven miles as the crow flies, the American troops had to cover fifteen to twenty miles of ground.

I knew that the First Division would probably be in the centre of the most active section of the front. I found First Division headquarters in a little white stone hut shattered by bombs and shell-fire.

General Allen believed that if the highest hills in this particular area were taken, subordinate hills would be bound to fall. Working on this theory, the First Division had just made a night attack on the hills of Kef El Goraa. On the military maps it was marked with its height in metres, 575, and that is the name it was known by. The Americans began shelling the hill about midnight. The intensity of the shelling rose until between two and two-thirty in the morning, American guns rained 3,100 shells on the hill. The infantry attacked with hand grenades in the pitch darkness. They blasted the Germans out of their holes and by four-thirty that Easter Sunday morning the height was taken. During daylight, German resistance on the range of lower peaks leading towards Mateur had crumpled. By late afternoon the Germans were retreating so fast that the Americans had lost touch with them. The Americans were in fine spirits when I saw them that day. They were following their practice of never giving the enemy a rest. At night they would launch their hardest attacks and follow up in the daylight while artillery and aircraft kept pounding the Germans. The Americans would catch a few hours' rest during the day and be ready to attack again the next night. Only men in fine physical condition could fight like that. Meanwhile the Germans were under continuous pressure and their weary nerves got no rest at all. The next obstacle was Hill 609 and the Thirty-fourth Division, just moving up from reserve, was going to be given its chance at this.

On the First Army front, British and German armour had clashed and the British had knocked out twenty of the forty-four tanks the Germans threw into the battle. The tiny German pocket was still holding out on Longstop, but farther south the French advanced through a minefield to find the Germans had retreated and they had no opposition until they reached positions just in front of Pont du Fahs.

On Monday the 26th, after a heavy pounding by artillery and British and American bombers, Longstop surrendered. The two hundred Germans who were still holding out in the rocks and caves had been badly shaken by the artillery pounding. Heidous and Tongoush the British had taken or neutralized. The path down the valley was clear until the next obstacle, a low ridge called Djebel Bou Akouaz.

It had been intended that the Eighth Army should make a strong offensive against the hills beyond Enfidaville. That offensive never developed.

There had been a certain amount of feeling between the First and Eighth Armies. The Eighth had achieved victory after victory while the First was bogged in the mountains fighting tooth and nail with never a spectacular victory to show for it. Eighth Army men and officers were cocky and somewhat condescending. The attitude was not well received. Correspondents identify themselves with the army they are with and we who knew of the long bitter struggle of the First Army through the fall and winter looked somewhat askance at the desert warfare reporters who came over to our front from the Eighth Army. We felt somewhat as the city slicker might feel at meeting a bumptious country cousin. The Eighth Army now attacked the hills and got nowhere. The men who were directing the strategy of the big drive may have been displeased. Officers and men of the First Army could not help but be slightly (this was all wrong, of course, but very human) pleased that the Desert Rats were finding out what hill-fighting was all about. It would have been too much if the Eighth Army had succeeded in breaking through and taking Tunis, after the First Army had waited so long. The Eighth Army got jammed up in a narrow corner against the sea. Far from their weakening our front, they had given the Germans an opportunity, quickly seized, of taking forces away from the Eighth Army front and sending them over against us.

The chastening the Eighth Army received from the mountains was possibly a good thing. It gave them more respect for the First Army's fighting ability. Afterwards I asked many Eighth Army men whether they preferred fighting in the desert or in the mountains. They invariably

preferred the desert. From then on relations between the two armies developed on a plane of mutual respect. Montgomery's men no longer flaunted their prowess quite so openly and the First Army willingly gave the desert troops full respect for their excellent record and admitted fighting ability. The Enfidaville fighting made it certain that Tunis and Bizerta were not going to be just another incident in the Eighth Army's triumphal march. They were going to be the fruits of a real Allied victory.

Now the First Army was destroying the Germans piece by piece. For instance, between the 22nd and the 26th of the month, it was estimated that the British armour had drawn the full strength of the Tenth, Fifteenth, and Twenty-first Panzer Divisions into the Goubelat plain, there to be hammered and mauled by our tanks and artillery. We were losing men and material, but we could afford the losses better than the Germans. As long as the Germans would stand and fight we would continue chopping down their strength. The Germans seem to have believed our main thrust was coming up the Goubelat Valley.

In one of the dispatches I sent back for broadcast, I explained the situation like this: "When you turn a key in a rusty lock, the process may be difficult. You sweat and strain and the lock creaks. Suddenly the lock snaps open. The Tunisian campaign is still in the sweating and straining stage, but when the snap comes it may come suddenly."

The country through which the Americans and the First Army were fighting their way reminded me of the Berkshire mountains in Massachusetts or the Derbyshire Peak country in England.

Each peak had to be taken before the valley was open. Nor was the valley itself flat. The floor of the valley rose and fell in ridges just on the left of centre. One of the most important of these ridges was the Bou Akouaz known to us as the Bou Feature. It was not high, but many men died for it. It was taken and retaken, taken and retaken half a dozen times. From just beyond, the Germans could sweep it with artillery and mortar and machine-gun fire. In each of these hills the fighting followed what almost became a set pattern. The British would attack and take a hill. They

would be driven off by heavy artillery and mortar fire combined with an infantry attack. Then the British would hunt up the points from which the guns and mortars were firing on the hill and either take them or neutralize them with artillery fire. Finally, they would retake the hill from the infantry who were holding it.

On the day the Bou Feature was first attacked, I went down into the valley looking for an Irish friend, Lieutenant Desmond Fitzgerald of the Irish Guards. Down the centre of the valley, roads were narrow dust trails. Paths had been cleared through the minefields, but mines still lay along the edges of the road and in the grass and dirt beyond. Captain Heneker and I were driving in a little French Simca. When an enemy plane came over, we had to stop the car, get out and walk down the road a way, hoping that if the Messerschmidt was on a strafing mission it would not bother gunning one small French civilian car and two frightened men in battle dress trying to look inconspicuous on the brown roadway. We did not dare walk off into the field. The Guards had just taken over the area and as we came around a bend we saw two dead British soldiers just off the road. We wondered whether they had been killed by mines when they walked off the road or whether enemy shell-fire or machine-guns had got them.

Beyond Grich el Oued, a tiny village, we hoped to find the Guards resting.

Brigade headquarters was in a fold of uneven ground. All around, British twenty-five pounders and heavier guns were shelling spasmodically. A busy headquarters officer told me my friend, Fitzgerald, was in good health, but that in fifteen minutes the Irish Guards would be attacking a mile or so ahead of us. I was too low down to see the attack. To go up with the attacking force would be to risk my own neck needlessly and at the same time become a nuisance to the attackers. So I went back. That battalion of Irish Guards was in the thick of some of the most vicious fighting of the campaign. I believe that by the end Fitzgerald was about the only officer in the whole battalion who had neither been killed nor wounded.

By the 29th the momentum of the First Army's attack, failing the expected punch on the Eighth Army

front, had died down. The Germans had drawn reinforcements from the Enfidaville front and were counter-attacking furiously. The Guards had taken and lost the Bou Feature twice in as many days. In another part of the valley one British infantry unit had been overrun by an attack of thirty-five German tanks supported by infantry.

Yet summing up the situation in my own mind I felt that we would reach our goal, Tunis, within the next ten days. In Algiers I had good coverage. Ralph Howard Peterson had arrived from Washington and was broadcasting under the name of Ralph Howard, so that listeners should not confuse him with Elmer Peterson, broadcasting from London. Grant Parr had come over from the Eighth Army and was alternating with Peterson while Merrill Mueller, then still with *Newsweek*, was filling in with an occasional broadcast. To my dispatch of April 28th, I added a service message saying I believed Tunis would fall on May 7th. As that date approached I suggested getting ready to do a special broadcast announcing the fall the first moment the news broke. Arrangements were made well in advance. When the news broke, N.B.C. with some smart work in Algiers and New York had a clean scoop over its opposition.

Since the original scheme of a combined First and Eighth Army offensive had to be dropped, a new plan was decided. The Seventh Armoured Division and the Fourth Indian Division were brought over from the Eighth Army and attached to the First Army for the drive on Tunis. Their thousands of tanks and vehicles were brought in a great circling sweep around the back of the front. The roads were choked with Eighth Army transport, easy to differentiate from the First Army's because of its distinctive yellow colouring. Yet so complete was our air control of Tunisia by this time that the moving divisions were never once bombed, nor, as far as could be ascertained, was the huge movement spotted by German reconnaissance planes.

To the north the Americans, the French *goums* and the Corps Franc were going well. On May 1st, the American Thirty-fourth Division proved their right to be known as a first-class fighting unit by taking the important Hill 609. The fight was severe and bloody. The Thirty-fourth stormed the hill and repelled a counter-attack with hand-grenades

and the bayonet. An important obstacle on the way to Mateur had been eliminated.

I went up to see the American positions and the Corps Franc in the far north. The fighting was taking place in country covered with heavier and more impenetrable brush than I had ever seen. The British Commandos, who were the first in this part of the country, had had to spend days on end moving about and actually fighting on their hands and knees or on their stomachs. The Americans were making a wide circle around two hills that covered the Sedjenane-Mateur road, Green and Bald Hills. Supplies for the most advanced units had to be dropped by parachute. The best roads were only winding trails and the thickets on hills and valleys blocked vision for more than a foot or two in front of the fighting men.

At American Second Corps headquarters and at various British headquarters I kept hearing officers praise the French Corps Franc. They were regarded as undoubtedly the finest fighting unit in the French Army.

One American officer said: "I've just written home to my wife that in the brush forests of northern Tunisia the Corps Franc has kindled again the torch of French military glory." An American general sent a message to the commander of the Corps Franc saying that the courage of the unit had been an example to all who had seen it at the front.

Captain Boles and I went up to see the Corps Franc. We succeeded in getting up to one of their field dressing stations, where wounded men were being brought in from the field, but the path to the fighting was too narrow for our car and we could not afford to spend the two or three days it would have taken us to get up and see them and return.

The history of the Corps was a romantic one. Many Frenchmen had helped the Allied landings. A pro-Allied French General, Montsabert, conceived towards the end of November, the idea of uniting all these Frenchmen in a volunteer fighting corps. Admiral Darlan agreed with the idea because he wanted to have them all together under military discipline and so control pro-Allied elements who might be troublesome.

That was how the Corps Franc began, a corps of volun-

teers who welcomed the Allies and hated Hitler. The British, who needed every gun and bullet, gave them a minimum of equipment and uniform. Most of the Corps Franc were followers of General de Gaulle and openly wore the Cross of Lorraine on their tunics. They ranged in age from sixteen to sixty. Because of their de Gaullist sympathies, their heroic accomplishments were never published and their support from the French military hierarchy could hardly be called enthusiastic.

A few of the Corps Franc at the beginning were Monarchists who hoped the Corps might one day become a kind of prætorian guard for the Count of Paris in his bid to become king of France. Others of the Corps Franc were foreigners, Spanish Republican refugees, Germans, Italians, all haters of Fascism. They were foreign legionnaires who wanted to fight for an ideal, not for pay,

The Corps went into the line in February. Much of their material they seized from the Germans or Italians and I saw two wounded men of the Corps Franc who were happy as larks because they had just captured two good German machine-guns and plenty of ammunition. They kept asking when they could get back into the line to use the new guns.

British units next to them found they fought with fury and clung like limpets to ground they had taken. Each man fought as though he had a personal grudge against the enemy. Some of them came out of the Vichy concentration camps in North Africa, volunteered immediately for the Corps Franc and went right to the front. When the Americans moved in next to them, the Frenchmen were given plenty of material, machine-guns, jeeps and mortars. They used it well and drove the Axis forces back through the brush towards Bizerta.

One British officer jokingly said the Corps Franc and the *goums* were going so fast headquarters couldn't keep contact with them and he wouldn't be surprised if they suddenly got a message saying: "We have taken Bizerta. Come on in."

Boles and I lunched with the nurses and doctors of the field dressing unit. Two priests ate with us. One was a Basque, the other a Catalan, both refugees from Fascist Spain. One of the nurses was a woman of fifty-odd, a

Frenchwoman who had been living in South America when war broke out. She had been an army nurse in the first world war, and has spent more than a year in a ward for men whose faces had been shattered and disfigured.

In 1939 she crossed the Atlantic to France and volunteered again for the nursing service. After the armistice, she had come to North Africa and been imprisoned some months for her outspoken anti-Axis feelings.

"Neither General de Gaulle nor I," she said with a smile, "admitted France was defeated."

Then she had been released and volunteered for the hard front-line work of nursing the Corps Franc.

She said to me: "Monsieur, I hate Fascism. When we have taken Berlin, I shall go to America and volunteer to go with you to Tokio. Fascism there. Fascism here. It is all the same evil."

I don't know whether it was that nurse that the Americans were thinking of decorating. An American officer told me about her. Under artillery and machine-gun fire she drove a jeep on to the battlefield to pick up a wounded officer. As she approached him, the car just ahead of her blew up on a mine. She drove on, picked up the wounded officer, put him in her jeep, then drove calmly away over a trail she knew had not been cleared of mines.

In the dusty little hospital tent they were dressing the wounds of captured Italian prisoners. That day alone the Corps Franc had captured five hundred Italians. When Boles and I headed south, we were both impressed with the Corps Franc d'Afrique.

The British had been keeping up an intense pressure on the German defences. Little by little they were wearing them down. Material that could not be replaced was being destroyed. For instance, just south of the Bou Feature a German force of twenty to thirty tanks attacked at a point known by the picturesque name of Gab Gab Gap. The British let them into a trap of anti-tank guns. Eleven tanks were destroyed and later blown up by British engineers. Others were damaged.

For several days the sky over the front had been practically cleared of Axis planes. We correspondents now bothered to spot for aircraft only when we were in the very

foremost positions. Anywhere behind the line we drove about comfortably sure that our aircraft would deal with any chance raider.

With the arrival of the two new divisions, the First Army was ready to put the last ounce of pressure on the key. The rusty lock was about to snap open. Nobody doubted the outcome. It was only a question of whether it would take two or three or four days to reach Tunis.

The attack was to be a joint one made by British corps. The Germans seemed to expect that the main drive would come down the Goubelat Valley where the British armour had been manœuvring for so long. Instead, the attack would knife straight down the Mejerda Valley on the shortest route to Tunis.

A striking force of four divisions, on the left the Fourth Indian Division followed by the Seventh Armoured Division and on the right the Fourth British Division followed by the Sixth Armoured, would smash straight down on a front ranging from two to two and a quarter miles in width. The concentration of power was impressive, with its total of five hundred and fifty tanks in that narrow space. Other divisions would protect the flanks of the corridor the striking force was going to make. Strong enemy formations were known to be on each side of it.

The drive would go to the right of the Bou Feature and to the left of the main Medjez-el-Bab to Tunis road.

Artillery had been almost the only weapon throughout the campaign in which the British had the edge over the Germans consistently. As late as February artillery was the only reserve the First Army had behind the line to stop a strong Axis attack.

In this campaign the British and American gunnery had proved its value time after time. In their northern hills the Americans were taking prisoners whose nerves were shattered by the pounding they had received from American artillery. The same thing was true on the British front.

The British First Army had brought to perfection in the campaign a system of flexible mass gunnery.

A senior artillery officer would be placed in the front line. Under his control he would have, say, a hundred guns. He did not interfere with the ordinary work of the separate

batteries and their observation posts, but when needed he could by means of radio control suddenly switch all his guns on to one target. The effect of approximately five hundred shells a minute raining on to a German position or an attacking tank force was powerful and effective. The senior officer could switch the concentration to another target in a matter of minutes. There was theoretically no limit to the concentration that could be fired as easily as one gun.

To open the final offensive a concentration of four hundred British guns was ready to smash the German positions and neutralize the German batteries. That meant that between one and two thousand shells weighing from twenty-five to one hundred pounds apiece were going to be rained each minute on the German defending forces.

In airfields not far from the front, an air force approximately half-American and half-British was ready to add a crushing blow to the attack. Approximately two hundred and fifty bombers, one hundred fighter-bombers and numerous fighters would carry out an intense bombardment of the German positions. As the troops advanced so would the bombing, moving on to secondary objectives carefully worked out on the air maps. Squadrons of fighters would keep continual patrol over the advancing British forces, so they should not be troubled by air attack. Other squadrons of fighters would be strafing the roads and anything that moved behind the German lines.

We correspondents were given the complete picture of the battle by the British Corps commanders before it began. This was going to be a real blitzkrieg and we would see how the Germans liked it for a change.

The British conducting officer with whom I began to make plans to cover the final offensive was Captain David Heneker. The son of a general, David had gone to Sandhurst, been a regular officer, then resigned from the army a year or two before the war. He had rejoined on the outbreak of war. He was a talented composer of popular songs and had written many hits for London shows. I had known him to compose the words or music of a song while we were driving along on some military manoeuvre in England. He was a close friend and because I knew he had plenty of

courage I thought he was just the man to go on the hunt for a story that might be a dangerous one.

Another American correspondent was with me, Will Lang of *Time* magazine. He was a quiet, friendly, hard-working correspondent and a good companion for such a venture. The third correspondent was a Frenchman, Robert Raymond of the *Echo* of Algiers. Robert had broadcast in French for the Office of War Information. I had met him in Algiers. He had been touring the front alone when his car broke down. He came to the First Army correspondents' camp, looked me up, and moved into my tent with his bedroll. He was not regularly accredited to the British but he was so likeable that Major Pilkington allowed him to stay with us as an *entente cordiale* gesture. He had the courage of a lion and would go anywhere or do anything to get a story. Robert was pro-Ally to the core. During one period of romantic aberration in his youth he had been an acrobatic dancer, but in later years he had settled on the more mundane careers of teacher and journalist. He had a fund of humorous stories and comments on life, love and war that kept us all laughing. The difficulty was that Robert knew not one word of English and Will Lang not one word of French. David could make himself understood in French and could understand it if spoken very slowly.

Robert told his stories quickly. I would laugh until I cried. Then I would translate the story and Will and David would go off into fits of laughter, by which time I would be quite straight-faced. Robert never questioned our decisions on what we would do. He would sit quietly while the three of us English-speakers made up our minds. When I explained what we were going to do, his comment was always the same, "Bon. Partons." (Good. Let's leave.)

The man who drove our Humber was Driver Reed, a short, dark-haired man who looked as though in civil life he might have been a boxer.

A preliminary attack began at five o'clock on the afternoon of May 5th. It was another attack on the Bou Feature just to the left of the corridor down which the big offensive would go. It was intentionally started late in the afternoon in the hope that the Germans would not throw a counter-attack against it before early morning.

The big offensive would begin with the four-hundred gun barrage at three o'clock on the morning of May 6th.

David, Will, Raymond and I decided to go out to the Mejerda Valley that night to see the barrage and the beginning of the offensive. At eleven at night we left our camp and drove to corps headquarters. After a few inquiries we found a headquarters major of artillery.

"Where can we go to get the best view of the artillery barrage?" David asked.

"I myself helped prepare the barrage," the Major answered. "I'm going up at two-thirty on Grenadier Hill to watch it. I'd be delighted to have you come along."

We were lucky. Hunting around in the darkness we might or might not have found a good position. In the valley itself among the guns we would have had only an impression of noise and the nearest gun-flashes. On Grenadier Hill we could see the whole sweep of the barrage in the valley below.

The intervening time we spent trying to doze off in the car and not succeeding. Occasionally we saw a flare dropping from a German aircraft. The night wind was like ice.

"May 5th in North Africa," said someone between shivers. Robert wrapped himself in a kind of oilskin jacket, lay on the ground and went peacefully to sleep. His family had lived in North Africa since his grandfather was sent there from France in 1851 as a man of undesirable Republican sentiments. Probably the Raymonds were by now acclimatized to North African weather.

At last we started. The major and a R.A.F. officer drove ahead of us in their own car. They went quickly and Driver Reed had a hard time keeping up with their bobbing red tail-light. Our blackout lights were on. As we sped through Medjez a military policeman yelled: "Put out those lights." At the speed the major was going we would probably crash into something without lights, so we kept them on.

"Nervy fellows, these M.P.s," David said. "Always yelling about lights when it doesn't make a bit of difference."

Beyond Medjez the road wound upward. We parked the

cars and followed the major. We could see nothing. I am no mountain climber. When I saw Grenadier Hill in daylight rising sheer upward I knew I would never have attempted it if I had known what I was tackling. The major set a brisk pace and I stumbled behind in the blackness with the rest following up a path so sheer that sometimes you had to work your toes in and steady yourself with your hands on the ground to keep from slipping backward. In the pockets of my trench-coat were two full bottles of whisky brought along in case of need.

As a matter of fact, the bottles were unopened when we returned to camp next day. In that climb up Grenadier Hill, they became heavier and heavier. It would have been a pleasure to fall beside the path but I dared not fall with the bottles in my pockets. I barely reached the top and flopped down exhausted on a stone. I took little pleasure in watching a barrage or anything else for the next half-hour. At least I had not disgraced the corps of war correspondents in the eyes of a headquarters officer by stepping aside to rest partway up.

The barrage began when we expected it. From three o'clock until dawn gun-flashes made the valley in front of us a heaving sea of flame. The lights twinkled, winked and seemed to dart back and forth like the Christmas trees you used to see in store windows covered with winking lights. Every flash meant a load of destruction hurtling off towards the Germans waiting in their gun pits.

Several other officers were up on the bare summit of the hill. One said: "I wonder whether they've radioed a message to Hitler yet that the big attack has begun."

An Eighth Army officer said he had never seen such a display of artillery power, so concentrated in that valley only five or six miles broad. The barrage opened at just the moment that the Germans had chosen to start a counter-attack against the Bou Feature. The German troops must have thought they were counter-attacking straight into the mouth of hell. It cannot have been a pleasant experience.

Down among the guns the noise must have been ear-splitting. We were so high that the noise sounded as though thousands of doors were being slammed down a tunnel. At times it reminded you of a drummer banging with incre-

dible speed on a slack-headed bass drum. Above the noise we could hear the clank of British tanks moving up and the clattering whirr as they rounded corners just below our hill. Hundreds of tanks with the hundreds of trucks and cars that accompany them were moving into position.

The infantry advance had already begun unseen in the dark below us. The guns lifted their barrage and began cracking at the German artillery emplacements and the positions the British infantry would be attacking later in the morning.

The Fourth Indian Division and the Fourth British Division raced down the valley against the first objectives neck and neck.

Beyond them in the valley were thought to be about eight or nine battalions of combat troops, the equivalent of perhaps a division. German tanks on the front and around Massicault were estimated at eighty-five. Artillery was believed to have been strengthened especially around one of our first objectives a few miles away, an insignificant point on the map called Frenj with high ground running northward of it.

The British infantry aimed at Frenj, the Indians led by the little cocky, cat-footed Ghurkas aimed at the high ground on the left. The Ghurkas, who come from the independent Indian state of Nepal, join the British Army generation after generation because they like to fight. Fighting, they argue, is the proud privilege of mountain men like themselves. At home in their own mountains they would fight for pleasure or because otherwise they would be bored. With the British, they get plenty of opportunity for fighting and get paid for the pleasure besides.

The Ghurkas went on to the first objectives swinging their khukri knives. The Germans had been dazed by the barrage and the opposition was not difficult. They pride themselves on decapitating an enemy at one stroke. On night raids they sometimes slip behind enemy lines, killing Germans silently. It may be argued on good grounds that the Ghurkas are merciful killers. The Germans they meet in close combat suffer no pain.

Both the British and the Indians were on their objectives by nine in the morning.

We on the hill were chilled to the bone. The rest had left and we four, Heneker, Lang, Raymond and I, were sitting alone like four crows on a fence when dawn began to lighten the sky ahead of us.

The Mejerda Valley was a strange sight. The angry fire of the guns was as fierce as ever. But we were seeing it through a pall of dust. A dozen roads and trails snaked down the valley and from every one clouds of powdery dust rose hundreds of feet into the sky. I don't know whether it was the dust that caused it, but a quarter-circle of rainbow was cutting down through the hills on the opposite side of the valley. Tanks had trampled out roads where no roads existed the previous day. Every car that moved carried its dust-plume and drivers moved in a brown whirling screen that made it impossible to see more than a few yards. Miles behind and miles ahead, the columns of tanks and guns and cars streamed out, all heading towards Tunis.

Often in my work as a war correspondent since the fall of France I had worried about German aircraft, thinking about the bomber or fighter that might wipe out the house or the car or the foxhole I happened to be in. When I saw that mass of transport visible for many miles I wondered what the German Luftwaffe would do about it.

At just a quarter to six we saw our first planes, twelve Allied bombers. They swept over us in formation, moving as majestically as swans on a lake. They sailed in a great half-circle over their objectives, the German positions on the ridges down the valley. They came back towards us without dropping their bombs. We saw them wheel and turn and go over again. This time they did drop their bombs and as black columns of smoke cut through the dust, the bombers rode home.

They were leaving and others were coming—twelve—eighteen—twenty-four. Sometimes we saw as many as fifty-odd planes in the air over our valley at the same time, all British and American. They were coming so fast we stopped counting after the first half-hour. We had been told by Air Commodore Cross that the rate of the bombing flights would be twelve to eighteen planes every seven minutes. It was certainly that fast and I thought perhaps a bit faster. Before nine o'clock more than a thousand plane trips

were made over the valley right where we could see them: fighters, bombers, all ours, screening the great movement and blasting out the Germans. We could watch the anti-aircraft bursts among them but while we were counting we did not see any planes missing and only one disabled that limped off on one engine for some nearby Allied airfield. It kept up like that all day. It was the most impressive exhibition of air power I had ever seen and I saw the German raids in the Battle of Britain. A German prisoner who had fought a year or so in Russia said it was the most impressive exhibition of air power he had ever seen as well. During the whole day I heard of only two enemy planes which approached the valley. The previous night a German aircraft was reported to have dropped two bombs. That was the extent of German air retaliation.

We walked, climbed and skidded down Grenadier Hill, found the car with Reed asleep in it and went down the valley.

Once the infantry had taken the first objectives, the two armoured divisions could be launched. Down the valley they thundered.

The armour began going at such a rate between nine and ten o'clock that the sorties of a hundred and fifty bombers had to be cancelled for fear our own armour would be on the objectives by the time the bombers arrived. The Sixth Armoured Division bumped into twelve or fifteen enemy tanks, knocked out five and lost one of their own. The remaining German tanks fled, but during the day the Sixth met spasmodic tank opposition. The Seventh Armoured met twenty-four German tanks. The German tank officers looking out of their eye-slits or turrets must have shuddered when they saw that mass of tanks coming at them out of the dust. At any rate, the Germans turned and sped away. By nightfall both armoured divisions were on high ground north and south of Massicault, fifteen miles from Tunis. In the north the American Ninth Division was only twelve miles from Bizerta.

Our carload of correspondents went down the valley in the dust. Guns, tanks, trucks, everything was on the move. After a long hunt and a longer trip than we expected we found the Fourth Indian Division. Their headquarters was

down in front of a big artillery concentration and the guns were popping their shells over our heads all the time we stayed there.

One British officer of the division said it was the first time he ever remembered divisional headquarters out in front of the artillery. We saw hundreds of guns. They were barking away at objectives set for them by the infantry. The infantry had moved so fast that all the scheduled artillery objectives had been overrun and were now in our hands. We stayed around chatting with the men and officers who had been doing the fighting. Only one or twice did we hear the whoosh and explosion of a German shell coming back at us.

We lunched on a can of cold ravioli and some corned beef in the middle of the British striking force. Then we went back to Thibar. We were caked in dust and had had no sleep for two nights.

That evening in camp a headquarters spokesman told us that the attack had gone faster than expected. The British were surprised that no counter-attack had materialized and judged that the weight and direction of the attack had caught the Germans unprepared. The British had expected the Germans to try to make a stand on the Massicault-Tebourba line.

"It will be interesting to see," the headquarters officer said, "just where the devil the Boche is going."

Late that night an officer told us he had heard that both armoured divisions were on the outskirts of the city of Tunis and might enter it at dawn. We did a fair amount of cursing. But the story was just a headquarters rumour. The British had not gone beyond Massicault that day.

CHAPTER XIII

TRIUMPH IN TUNIS

TUNIS was the goal. For six months men of the Allied armies in North Africa had worked and fought and died and in their minds kept beating the thought: "Some day we shall get to Tunis." Whether we were in Morocco, Algeria or the mountains of northern Tunisia, the thought of Tunis haunted us as the thought of cool streams and green fields sometimes haunts men in the desert. While Tunis hovered beyond our reach we could not think seriously of other things or consider them important. If Berlin had been invaded or Tokio destroyed, I think we should have considered those incidents trifling ones in comparison with the capture of the city that filled all our horizons, Tunis. Without Tunis we were incomplete men, starved, hag-ridden by unfulfilled destiny. With Tunis we should be complete and sane and able to turn to other things. Since I could make my own choice, that was why I went to Tunis and not Bizerta.

On the morning of May 7th we began preparing our car for the trip down the valley to the battle. Someone said something about taking our bedrolls in case we had to spend a night or two in the open on the way. Some of the other correspondents were doing this.

I said: "Why take our bedrolls? To-night we are going to sleep in the best hotel in Tunis." The statement was a foolish one because we did not then know how strongly Tunis would be defended. But Heneker, Lang, Raymond and I were intoxicated by the nearness of Tunis and we all felt that no matter how we did it, we were going into Tunis that day. We left our bedrolls behind.

Reed drove fast. We all wanted to get up to the advance forces to find out what the chances were of entering Tunis.

The main road from Medjez-el-Bab to Tunis is a good, hard-surfaced road. This road was the extreme right boundary of the corridor the attacking divisions were

making down the valley. The tanks and trucks had not used the road at all. They had gone by the narrow dirt roads or cut their own dusty tracks over on the left of the main road to Tunis. To the left of the road, then, was a swathe of ground that was all ours. To the right of the road, we knew only that strong German forces were in position. One of our divisions was presumably guarding this area from a flank attack. It would have been safer to have gone down the centre of our corridor, for in case of attack we should have been in the centre of our own forces. But such a choice would have meant slow going through choking dust. We decided to stay on the main road until we saw some reason for leaving it.

We passed Peter's Corner where the previous night German troops had been reported. About half an hour after us a British officer, sent out by the infantry school in England to make comparisons between British and German mortar work, was driving down the same road. He had been staying in our camp in Thibar. A German anti-tank gun suddenly opened fire on him, wrecked his car and blew off his leg. The officer managed to get out and crawl some fifty feet off the road.

Three German soldiers came up to him and asked him to accept their surrender. They had been in their concealed gun-pit watching the First Army go by. They did not know what was happening. They believed they were isolated. For some inexplicable reason they had decided to shoot at this particular officer's car after seeing dozens go by. Now they wanted to surrender. The wounded officer cursed feebly and told them to go and find a military policeman to take their surrender. In spite of the traffic passing, the wounded man was unnoticed for some hours. By the time he was found, he had lost too much blood. I heard he died next day.

All along the road we kept seeing wrecks of cars and tanks that had been destroyed in other battles or blown up by mines. A few miles down the road a sign said that we had come to the end of that part of the road that had been cleared of mines. We were discussing whether to stay on the main road or turn off into one of the mine-free lanes on the left in the valley when we saw an armoured reconnaissance

car coming towards us. The driver said he had been a few miles down the road and hadn't come on to any minefields or seen any Germans. The assurance was enough, for on the surface of a hard macadam road minefields are usually easy to see before you reach them. You see the patches where the mine-holes have been dug. We continued.

David stopped the car when we met some military policemen he knew were attached to the Sixth Armoured Division. He was quite sure they would be among the first into Tunis and if we stayed with them we should have a good chance of getting into the city before the other correspondents. We turned the car around, drove a little way back and parked by the side of the road for a lunch of bully beef. While we were eating, two or three other carloads of correspondents whizzed by.

Two soldiers working a mine-detector that is held like a vacuum-cleaner came towards us along the edge of the road. They circled around us and continued down towards Tunis.

"Find anything?" we called to them. They shook their heads. Two or three minutes later I noticed they had stopped at the end of the road. They dug out a mine. We felt uncomfortable because we had driven past that point, turned around and come back not caring whether we were on the edge or the middle of the road. At that moment we were all standing on the road shoulder. We turned the car very, very carefully and pointed it towards Tunis. Stopping with these M.P.s we saw our first prisoners, a batch of a hundred Germans. They were an ordinary lot of men except for one or two big, blond giants. They seemed neither especially depressed nor especially elated about being taken prisoner.

Seeing the big fellows made me think of two places, an outdoor swimming pool near Munich and the lovely sandy beach at Tabarka in northern Tunisia.

At that Munich pool years before the war, I had seen beautifully built young Germans gravely exercising on parallel bars, lifting weights, and doing a whole complicated series of gymnastic exercises. Their muscles were bulging. I offered one of them a glass of beer. He said he never drank beer because beer had been the curse of the old

Germany. The flabby muscles that come from beer-drinking had been one reason Germany lost the last war. Now a new generation of men were growing up in the new Germany who did not drink beer but with exercises built up their bodies so that Germany might be strong.

On the Tabarka beach I had seen several hundred British soldiers capering about naked in the waves. They were not, in general, beautifully built, but their bodies had a tough, enduring look. It struck me then that in each generation the Germans builds himself up, gravely, with difficult exercises and self-denial to become a kind of perfect specimen of manhood, a blond god. Then along comes a runty, snag-toothed Cockney who never takes exercise if he can help but who will drink beer as long as the pubs stay open and you will pay for it. The little Cockney invariably beats hell out of the big German. It all must be very disillusioning for the Germans in the long run.

The sight of the other correspondents passing us made us get going. The possibility that these particular M.P.s would be among the first into Tunis was too slender, even for David. There was very little traffic on the road, just the correspondents and an occasional truck or reconnaissance car.

All the thousands of vehicles were moving down far over on our left and we could not see them. In a field on our right we saw a company of infantry. We asked one of the officers what was happening. He said there were Germans in the nearby hills and his brigade was just about to move over to work on them.

In a little village, some French people waved at us and cheered. We stopped to talk with them. The Germans had just left the village the previous night. They were delighted to see us and pressed us to drink some wine with them. From a water-tower we could see some tanks moving far down on the right-hand side of the road. It had begun to rain. Our driver disappeared for half an hour while we stamped about in the rain. He had found a German quartermaster's dump and came back with the car loaded with a weird collection of objects such as toilet-kits and bedbug-powder for his mates back in camp. We cursed him roundly because we now thought we should probably be the last into Tunis.

In one village we and other correspondents stopped to watch a tank battle taking place a couple of miles ahead. Through field-glasses it looked like a toy battle. The British tanks would come up to the brow of a hill. Shells would fall among them in white puffs. One tank was hit. It stopped and smoke came out of it.

In the village was a German cemetery. Over each soldier's grave a neat black and white cross was cut in the shape of the Iron Cross. At the end of the cemetery a German tank was burning. We went towards it, but it was blazing fiercely inside and you could smell charred flesh. We moved away because we were afraid the ammunition might start exploding.

Some reconnaissance cars and tanks cut into the road from the left and we stayed with them. Just before we reached the outskirts of Tunis we got into a close-packed line of tanks and armoured cars. We heard some firing ahead and met some other reporters coming back. One British correspondent looked quite shaken. He said: "Two blocks down the street they're fighting with machine-guns and hand-grenades. It's awful. Nobody can go any farther." The reporters said they were going back to Massicault to send off their stories and spend the night.

We went ahead to see what it was all about. At a cross-roads we met some more reporters we know. About four hundred German prisoners were being marched out of the gateway to a big mansion. Someone told us it was one of the palaces of the Bey of Tunis.

We left the car and walked over to the gate. A native policeman in red fez and sky-blue uniform said: "Come quickly. I will show you where four or five more of the Germans are hiding. My brother-officer just called on them to surrender. They shot him in the stomach with a machine-gun."

David found a British tank officer and told him what had happened. A few minutes later, a Sherman tank, looking very tough and formidable, lumbered through the gate into the gardens. A few minutes after that, some more prisoners came out holding their hands up.

Prisoners were swarming at that cross-roads. Five came up to us and tried to surrender while we were standing

talking in the street. We pointed to a British tank officer and told them to surrender to him.

We heard some more firing a few blocks down the street, so we went on to investigate. The remaining correspondents went back at about this point. We were still not in Tunis. It was a suburb like New Rochelle or Jersey City is of New York City or Wimbledon of London.

A few Germans were holding out in a house up on the right of the road. A half-dozen British soldiers lying behind a bank that ran alongside the sidewalk were spraying the house with rifle-fire and bursts from their Bren-gun. Every once in a while the house would fire back at the street. A young British lieutenant was directing operations. David became full of fight and paced up and down in full view of the house while the rest of us kept prudently behind a corner.

The lieutenant was about to lead a flanking assault on the house when David said: "You fellows wait here. I'm going to go help in this attack."

We pointed out that a dead conducting officer would be no help to us at all. We now had a chance to be the first correspondents in Tunis and David was going to spoil it for the pleasure of risking his life trying to kill a German. David calmed down and said he would go with us instead of with the attackers.

I met some British soldiers who had been held as prisoners for several weeks. They were bearded and emaciated. They told me that most of the thousand in their camp had dysentery caught from the foul living conditions. Five hundred men had been sent away to Italy the previous day, but the Germans had not realized until that very morning that the Allied forces were so near Tunis:

The firing from the house had stopped. We saw a figure going in from the side and the soldiers in the street started to shoot.

Someone yelled: "Stop that shooting, you bloody fools. He's one of ours." The house had evidently been taken.

Nearby the road forked. We had to decide which way to go. A clock on one of the buildings gave the time as ten minutes past four. A French civilian said: "I have seen two tanks go down the left-hand road. Down the right-hand

road nothing has gone, but I heard there were Germans down there."

We took the left-hand road. In a couple of minutes we met the two tanks returning. We thought the Shermans had probably been on a reconnaissance but their motors made so much noise we knew it was no use trying to talk to them.

We moved slowly, always expecting trouble and never meeting any. By the time we reached the gates that mark the beginning of Tunis, people had begun to cheer us. No other correspondents had been within a mile of those Tunis gates.

I later carefully checked up in an official French guidebook on Tunisia. Only the territory inside those gates was marked as Tunis and given in colour on the street plan. Outside, the areas were marked in white and were given various other names. That is why Lang and I were irritated next day to learn that other correspondents had sent stories date-lined May 7th indicating they had been in Tunis.

Some correspondents used phrases like "I was in Tunis to-day." We thought they might have said "I was near Tunis" or "I was on the outskirts of Tunis." At least we had the satisfaction of knowing that we were the only correspondents to enter Tunis on May 7th.

People crowded the sidewalks. They kept cheering: "Vivent les Allies," "Vive l'Angleterre," "Vivent les Americains," "Vive la France," "Vive de Gaulle."

They rushed up to the car and wrung our hands. They climbed on the hood and on the top.

"Where are the Allies? What is happening outside Tunis?" they kept asking. We learned we were the first men in Allied uniform any of them had seen and we figured that the tanks must have gone in to take the city by some other road.

Robert was in an ecstasy of happiness. He popped his head up through our sliding roof and gravely bowed his acceptance of the delirious population's homage. We were all saluting at least once a second. Robert had an air of simple grandeur. He was getting all the plaudits that a conquering general would have received.

Robert was wearing a beret, riding trousers and a jacket with the insignia of the French youth organization, the Chantiers de Jeunesse. Will and I both wore the American knitted caps. Will was dressed in ordinary American field outfit and I in British tropical uniform. David had the same uniform with a British officer's cap.

"Are you English, American or French?" people would shout. Robert and I took turns yelling: "We are American, English and French, all three. We are the Allies. We, the Allies, have taken Tunis. You need fear the Boches no longer."

This always brought delighted cheers from the crowds. They gave us the V-sign and we kept smiling, saluting and giving the V-sign back to them.

Some people tried to kiss us as we drove. Jews kept wringing us by the hand and saying: "You cannot know what we have suffered. You are our deliverers."

One young man kept running beside us saying: "Now we can again see American films, Robert Taylor and Greta Garbo." We carried on a literally running conversation for a block about American films. I was feeling open-handed and somewhat regal as the result of this tremendous experience.

"You will get American films soon," I promised. "Clark Gable, Mickey Mouse and Myrna Loy as well. But most of the film stars are fighting for their country against the Boche. They do not have as much time to make films as in times of peace. We are bringing you food also. The Americans and the British are here. You are safe."

"*Vivent les vedettes de cinema*," shouted the young man. "They too are fighting the Boche."

As we made our way down the street with springs nearly breaking from the weight of the boys and men who hung all over the car, we heard some explosions. We found next day that the explosions were made by Germans blowing up with hand-grenades cars in garages along the street through which we were passing.

Robert knew Tunis. During the campaign a month or two previously he had sneaked into Tunis and spent several days there. He directed us to the Hotel Majestic as in his opinion the best hotel in Tunis.

We arrived at our hotel about a quarter to five. It took us some minutes to get out of the car through the crowd. As we went into the Majestic, two or three hundred people streamed in with us. They filled the lobby.

At this moment, although we did not dream it at the time, we were the only five men in Allied uniform in Tunis. A British lieutenant-colonel entered the town later that evening and, like us, spent the night. The troops that were to take over the town entered at dawn on the morning of May 8th. Outside the town was ringed with troops guarding against possible attack. The British armour had gone off chasing the remnants of the German armour. Next day some eight thousand German troops were rounded up in Tunis.

The clerks in the hotel seemed surprised to see us. The change must have seemed amazingly quick to them. Next day they told us that ten minutes before our arrival, two German officers who were drinking in the bar suddenly finished their drinks and left.

In the hotel and on the streets, we heard the same questions: "What is happening outside the city? Are the Allies about to capture Tunis?" Fully confident that British tanks and troops had entered Tunis and had probably taken over all the main points, we said: "The Allies have captured Tunis. We are the proof." Yet even at the time it seemed strange to us that no British officers had appeared at the Hotel Majestic. The Majestic was the sort of hotel that correspondents and officers usually head for. We put it down to the idea that probably only combat officers had yet arrived in town and they and their troops were undoubtedly busy clearing up Germans.

The crowd in the lobby kept trying to embrace us, shake hands with us and kiss us. We had to kiss grubby-looking babies as well as their mothers, elder sisters whether they were pretty or not and even men. The experience of getting kissed on both cheeks by an old man with a white three-day-old beard was not very pleasant. But they meant well.

They showered us with invitation and several tried to pull us away to their houses for drinks and meals.

It took us half an hour to sign the register, another half-hour to park the car in a neighbouring garage. By the time

we had gone to our rooms and washed it was nearly dinner-time. We felt happy and at peace with the world. We were in Tunis at last. We could not help being deeply affected by the triumphal procession we had just had and the signs of joy the people showed. Nothing like it had ever happened to any of us before. We had expected to have to dodge German snipers and Italian hand-grenades. Instead we had a welcome that Cæsar returning from the war would certainly have envied. We were amused a day or two later to read in the papers dispatches from other correspondents that had gone to London and been sent back and published in the French papers. The reports spoke of "fierce fighting" in the suburbs of Tunis on the afternoon of May 7th. It had not seemed very fierce to us. If there was any fighting that could be described as "fierce," we didn't see it.

We had expected to be in a bitter, last-ditch fight for Tunis. The Germans had not made such a stand. We had expected to run into huge minefields and to have to pick our way through them. We never met any. We did not then know the exact military situation, but the conclusion seemed obvious. The Allied blow had been struck with such power and speed that once we got through their forward defences, the Germans had no time to prepare others or organize a stand. They had been caught just as the French had been caught in 1940 by a military attack launched by an overwhelming striking force moving at lightning speed. Once the break-through was made, everything disintegrated in front of it.

We were all floating about the hotel with our heads just above a rosy bank of clouds and our feet never touching the floor. Robert still bore his air of simple dignity quite befitting the first Frenchman to enter Tunis with the Allies.

As though it were a mere trifle hardly worth mentioning he let it be known to all French people who questioned him that while we four had not won the campaign entirely single-handed, nevertheless, Eisenhower, Alexander and other notables would have found it very difficult to get anywhere without us. Robert gave the impression that whenever there was any rough work to be done, a city to be taken, a panzer division to be torn in shreds, we three war

correspondents and Captain Heneker were usually sent out of an afternoon to do the job.

"There are some very fine pro-Ally people here," said Robert. "They insist we dine with them. I have accepted for us. They would be hurt if we refused."

The food was excellent. We had hors d'œuvre, soup, steak, vegetables, dessert and plenty of good wine. High Axis officers had been staying at the Hotel Majestic and, judging by our first meal there, they had been eating very well.

About a dozen French men and women were at the big round table with us and they showed plainly their delight at our arrival. They told us that the Germans in Tunis had not appeared to realize their danger until that very morning. Even then it was some time before firing was heard on the outskirts of the city and the Germans and Italians began to get panicky. Many of them had civilian clothing and hurriedly put it on in place of their uniforms. Some Axis soldiers, they thought, were probably hiding in the houses of Axis-sympathizing Frenchmen or Italians.

They told us that some of the highest German officers must have realized the danger the previous night, for about three o'clock in the morning Admiral Esteva, the regent, had been dragged protesting from his bed, put in a plane and flown to Italy.

A dozen times during the meal someone proposed a toast—to the Allies, America, England, France, ourselves, victory, de Gaulle, Roosevelt, Churchill, Eisenhower, Alexander and French liberation.

After dinner we accepted an invitation to go to the house of one of the Frenchmen for a party. Even though we thought the army was in possession of the town we believed it highly improbable that all the Germans and Italians had yet been captured. For that reason we did not want to wander around an unknown city after dark. Even Algiers had not been entirely safe for a short period after our arrival. But to go with a party of Frenchmen to their house was a different thing. We stepped blithely forth, entirely unaware of the fact that several thousand German troops were still free as the wind in Tunis and that we were the only party from the Allied forces inside the city gates.

The streets were deserted. People were staying indoors as a precaution after dark and everything was quiet. Our voices echoed up the streets. We all expected the Germans would send over some bombers to give Tunis a hard bombing. If they had, the chances would have been better than a thousand to one that they would have hit some of their own men rather than any members of the Allied forces in Tunis.

The party was very successful. David found a piano in the house and played one song after another all the evening. For the last couple of days we had been singing two songs that David had just composed, one a simple, catchy tune with French words called "Simone," another called "I'll Remember to Forget." Robert had taught us a ribald French song named "Les Pères de Saint Bernardin." We had sung them so often that all of us, even Will Lang, knew the words and could roar out the chorus about "la vie, la vie, la vie, chérie—Ah-ha," and if that was the kind of life the monks of St Bernardin led, we too would become monks.

Those three songs will always bring back to us the memory of those days in the Mejerda Valley and the entry into Tunis. The French people knew the St Bernardin song and we taught them David's songs. We sang "Tipperary" as well as many French songs. Will Lang accompanied with a kind of vo-do-de-yo-do all the French songs.

The French told many funny stories and a Frenchman nicknamed Bob had an excellent voice and a fine sense of showmanship. He knew many of the songs Fred Astaire sang in his films and prided himself on his English though he spoke only a few phrases and understood it badly.

I had a hard time translating the jokes from French into English. One woman was the daughter of a christianized Berber and a Frenchwoman. She told stories in the French dialect spoken by the Arabs, using Arab words understood by all the Tunisians present but which had to be translated into French for me, then translated into English.

On one story I slipped up badly. It was the story of an Arab who had lost his "bourricot" and got mixed up with a honeymoon couple.

I made a guess at "bourricot," which I should have

known, and translated it as "wheelbarrow" which didn't affect the sense of the story.

"Ah, yes," said Bob in French, to show his friends his knowledge of English, "in English 'little donkey' is translated 'wheelbarrow.' I had forgotten for the moment."

Once or twice we heard rifle shots which we imagined were either snipers or Frenchmen firing rifles in high spirits.

As we were walking back to the hotel with one or two of the Frenchmen who lived there, we suddenly heard shots just ahead of us. We pressed against a wall near the street corner. Two cars whizzed past the corner, both doing sixty miles an hour or better. The car behind was firing at the car ahead. In the first car someone was shouting. Lang, who knew German, thought they were yelling in German. The two cars roaring down the black streets reminded you of a gangster movie. We never found out what it was. We heard later that a few Germans or Italians had been rushing around Tunis that night in cars firing at anything they happened to fancy, a kind of last fling before giving themselves up. Possibly some French patriots were settling scores with pro-Axis Frenchmen or with some Germans.

Back at the hotel we decided a final toast in champagne was a fitting way to mark our entry. The night clerk said:

"Impossible, messieurs. The wine cellar is locked and the proprietor has the key."

Robert got very angry. "Last night if some German officers had asked you for champagne, you would not have answered that way," he said. "We have come to save you, we French, British and American Allies. Tell your proprietor to give you the key and fetch us some champagne."

"Impossible," said the clerk stubbornly.

David is a very meek and retiring fellow. Now he too became angry.

"Look here," he said in slow French. "We are not just visitors. We have just conquered Tunis. *Nous desirons champagne.*" He took his revolver and laid it on the clerk's desk.

"Confidentially," I said to the porter, "you had better go and get the key. This officer is a very tough officer. He would as soon shoot you and the proprietor as eat, maybe sooner. To-day he is very tired because he has just shot forty or fifty Germans and a half-dozen Italians. When he

gets tired, he becomes irritated quickly. I have known him shoot men simply because he did not like the colour of their neckties. To-day he was complaining because he had not yet had the opportunity of shooting enough people. I think some champagne will satisfy him and turn his mind from this subject. But if I were you I should hurry. Unless he gets it quickly I will not be able to distract his attention and he will probably begin by shooting you, then your proprietor, before he decides to go to bed."

Within three minutes the clerk was back with the champagne.

Saturday morning was a town holiday. We had to force our way through the crowds that packed the streets. They kept cheering us and asking us whether the French troops were coming. We assured them they would see plenty of French, British and American troops before long, but just at this moment they were all very busy finishing off the Germans.

We walked down to the docks. The Allied bombers had done a beautiful job of bombing, wrecking the docks and nearby buildings with their raids, but dropping only an accidental bomb here or there in Tunis itself. I talked with one of the dock officials. He said the Germans had been bringing in only two or three vessels every week or so. He knew of only two or three ships that had been sunk by bombs in all our raids on Tunis harbour.

Over the city Spitfires were diving down over the rooftops and hurtling up the streets at that level before they rose in a graceful climb. The fighter boys threw their aircraft around as though they were doing it from sheer joy at being able to come over the city without meeting any flak. The flights were good propaganda. The population cheered them and we ourselves cheered with enthusiasm at this symbol of our victory.

Some British Army cameramen arrived about nine and since we were almost the only people in Allied uniform around took pictures of us. We began to see a few soldiers in the streets. Hundreds of people crowded around each one.

We went up on the balcony of a newspaper office to look at the crowd in the square below. People saw us and began

cheering and shouting. It was the moment for a speech but none of us felt up to making one. We gave the V-sign and smiled and that seemed enough.

People brought out British, American and Soviet flags they had kept hidden for months. They waved them in the streets and draped them on the houses. Communists quickly organized a procession of Italians. They carried signs bearing the hammer and sickle and slogans such as "Down with Mussolini," "Down with Fascism," "Long live America, Britain and the Soviet Union"—all in Italian. Some Italian soldiers still in their uniforms were helping to carry one of the signs.

Everyone joined in shouting "Hurrah for democracy and the Allies." You kept hearing "Vive de Gaulle" everywhere. The name of de Gaulle to the people of Tunis was the symbol of France's fight for liberation. None of us in the two days and nights we were in Tunis ever heard anyone shout "Vive Giraud." We and other American and British correspondents figured the town was about eighty per cent de Gaullist, fifteen per cent Fascist, with perhaps an indeterminate five per cent who were neither. The Fascists weren't talking or demonstrating.

Very occasionally we got a black look, usually from people who looked obviously German. No attempt had yet been made to round up any but a few picked Germans, Italians and Vichyites, and many German civilian men and women or German soldiers in civilian clothing were still walking freely around the streets. Since we now controlled the place, the Italians were all on our side. When American and British prisoners had first been marched in triumph by the Germans through Tunis, pro-Axis Arabs and Italians had spat at them and thrown things at them.

We began to see German and Italian prisoners now being rounded up. Beyond an occasional cry of "Down with the Boche," there was no demonstration against them.

Arabs had disappeared from Tunis streets. It seemed very strange, being in a North African city and not seeing any of the little shoe-shine boys. My big boots remained covered with dirt until I got back to Algiers.

We found the office of the British commandant of Tunis. He was in charge of the first force to enter and administer

the city. From him we learned that we were the only people from the Allied forces, besides himself, to enter the town the previous day and the only ones who spent the night in Tunis. The town, then, had a garrison of six: Heneker, Lang, Raymond, Reed, the British commandant and myself on Friday night.

We felt very pleased and joked about ourselves as "Heneker's Spear Force" and took as our motto: "Where we go, the tanks will follow."

The Germans had carried out some hasty sabotage at the electricity power plant, so at night we had only candlelight. The radio station had been damaged, but it became evident that the Germans had lacked time to do a thorough job.

The prisoners were being gathered up by the thousand. Base troops, like combat troops, submitted without a struggle although the German radio and special orders to commanding officers urged them to fight to the last man and the last bullet. Those Germans did not look like conquering heroes. They were giving up with their ammunition, their rations and equipment. In the course of the next few days over 250,000 men were going to surrender. Not for them the charge of the gallant six hundred, the battle on Wake Island, at the orders of the Fuehrer. Once again the character of the German nation in war was running true to form. Confronted by a stronger force, they quit.

They could have held out for another week, perhaps two.

Prisoners said that when they realized the strength of the forces against them, they decided to stop fighting. Yet only ten days before two hundred Germans were holding out well against far superior forces on Longstop. The change in psychology in that ten days can be explained. The Germans on Longstop believed their forces as a whole were still superior. Therefore they fought believing that no matter what happened to them, the Germans were going to continue to hold Tunisia. But when the First Army striking force sheared right through to Tunis the knowledge of that fact broke German morale entirely. They were now fighting in a losing struggle from which there could be no escape. It was as though German troops fighting on the Russian front were to hear suddenly that a powerful Allied force had

just taken Berlin, that no matter what they did Germany was lost. Their will to fight left them.

One theory of German readiness to surrender is that the Germans very sensibly took the view that Germany will be beaten in this war. They may have felt that as well-treated prisoners they will be of more use to Germany after peace is declared, as a nucleus around which she can build her next army for the next war. I do not know. German psychology is a strange thing and I know German refugees who, having been deprived of everything by the Nazis, condemn the methods Hitler used to make Germany world-powerful since those methods seem fated to be unsuccessful. They condemn Hitler's anti-Jew campaign because it deprived Germany of a good many valuable Jewish brains. What they do not condemn is Hitler's purpose, Germany's domination of the world.

The disorganization caused in the German military organization by our blow was such that the fight continued here and there for another two or three days. Some units out in the hills probably did not receive word of what was happening for several days.

Germans were wandering around Tunis all Saturday hunting for someone to whom they could surrender. One came up to us and asked to surrender. He was from Silesia, formerly part of Poland, and had served six years in the French Foreign Legion. He asserted that in his own village he was regarded by the Gestapo as pro-Ally suspect number three. He had only been called up the previous spring when Germany seemed to be raking everyone into the army she could, including some Viennese Social-Democrats who had spent most of the time since Hitler took Austria, in concentration camps. The Silesian brought with him a Frenchman in whose house he had been staying to vouch for the fact that he had frequently expressed anti-Nazi feelings. We finally found a military policeman who would take him away.

We drove out to Alouina airfield three or four miles outside Tunis. On the road we saw hundreds of prisoners. Some had formed themselves into ranks and were marching without any captors. Several hundred more, guarded by four or five Tommies, were sitting at the side of the road at

Alouina. On both sides of the road and scattered all over the airfield they could see the wreckage of their own planes smashed by Allied bombs. How easy it was for the German ground troops to fight when their own planes had mastered the sky over Poland and France and Greece. How difficult it was for German ground troops to fight well when, wherever they looked, Allied planes were bombing and strafing them and not a German plane could take the air. They did not like it. Some of them told me so. The end had come. They preferred life to death. They surrendered.

On Sunday we drove out to La Goulette, the outer port of Tunis. The effects of our bombing were evident all around the docks. But La Goulette harbour looked empty and deserted. Some British soldiers were moving anti-aircraft guns into position. One soldier was shooting a rifle at a tin can in the water. It was very peaceful out there, not far from the site of ancient Carthage.

I bumped into a British naval officer I knew, Lieutenant-Commander Dunstan Curtis, D.S.C. It was a pleasant chance meeting. We looked across the bay to Hamman Lif where the First Army was finishing off the last resistance on Cape Bon. The British were moving along the peninsula, and we could see the artillery firing and the shells landing on the wharfs and in the water near the shore. We believed some of the Germans might be trying to embark in small craft.

"But it won't do them any good," Curtis smiled through his red beard. "The navy will see to that."

We looked over towards the curve of the city that was the fulfilment of all our hopes. Across the calm water it brought tranquillity and contentment to us. We wished that those who had died on the way could have seen it.

David, Robert, Will and I passed through the city once again. The people were tired after two days of cheering so many troops from three armies. But some of them were not too tired as we went out through the city on the road home to give us the sign—V for victory.

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L' ENVOI

REFLECTIONS IN A BOMB BAY

I FLEW from North Africa to England sitting on some sacks of mail in the bomb bay of a Royal Air Force bomber. It was very cold and uncomfortable. There was nothing to read and it was impossible to sleep.

I fell to wondering what lessons we had learned in that six-month North African campaign and what the campaign had proved. To take last things first, the campaign had proved that an Allied military victory won by an Allied force is possible. At the beginning of this unique experiment, there were misunderstandings and some friction. By spring these had been largely eliminated and from top to bottom the force that carried out the final offensive was a co-ordinated organism. Respect and understanding between the Allies had grown with the months of association. That fact was a hopeful one to those who knew that only an Allied force could free Europe from the Germans.

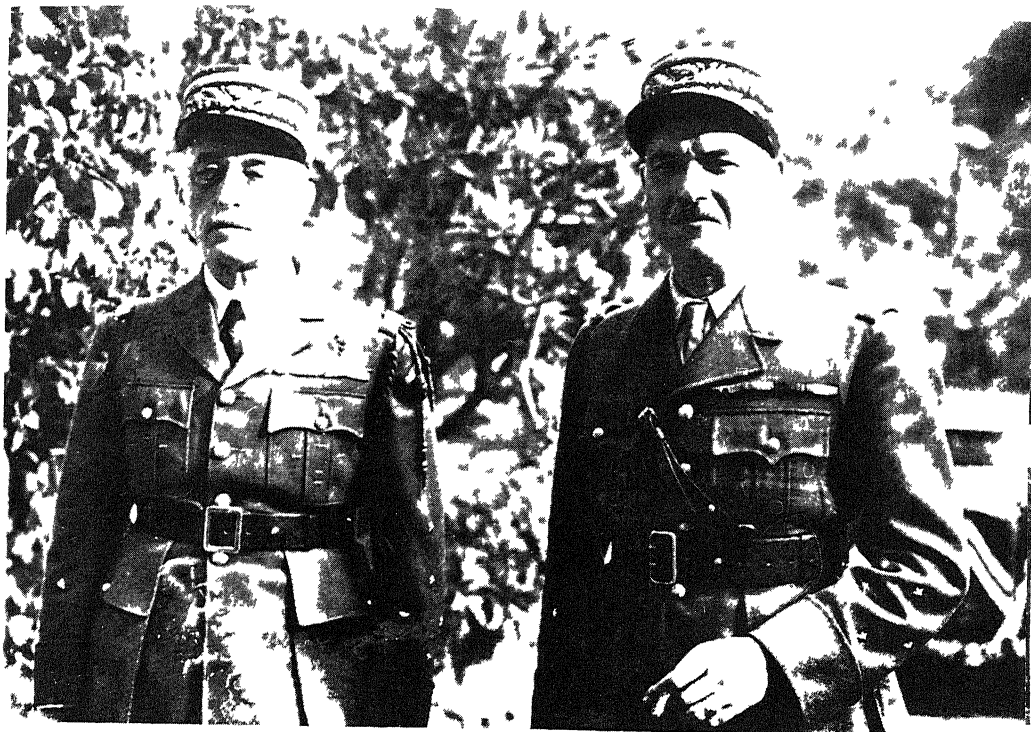
As for the lessons, I was not so sure. In spite of the political mess we had made of North Africa, I was not sure that even yet we had learned how much we needed a co-ordinated politico-military policy. In North Africa we did not trust the people or the French men of goodwill. Against the judgment of our own peoples, we trusted the Fascists, the defeatists, men whose thought and action led to death and sterility. To do that, I felt, was a denial of the purpose of our fighting.

If that were done in Europe, we should not be keeping faith with ourselves nor with the peoples we came to free. A military victory would be hollow indeed if it were only the prelude to disillusion, discontent and another war.

I wondered what we should do with the bad men on the Continent. Would we attempt, by some misguided humanitarianism, to protect or exalt them? Of what use the glib word "unity" applied alike to the men who condoned and aided this mighty treachery to mankind that had come out of Germany, and to the men who had persevered in the battle against it? Eliminate the most vicious of the first class, perhaps, and give the weak and mean-spirited a chance to regain

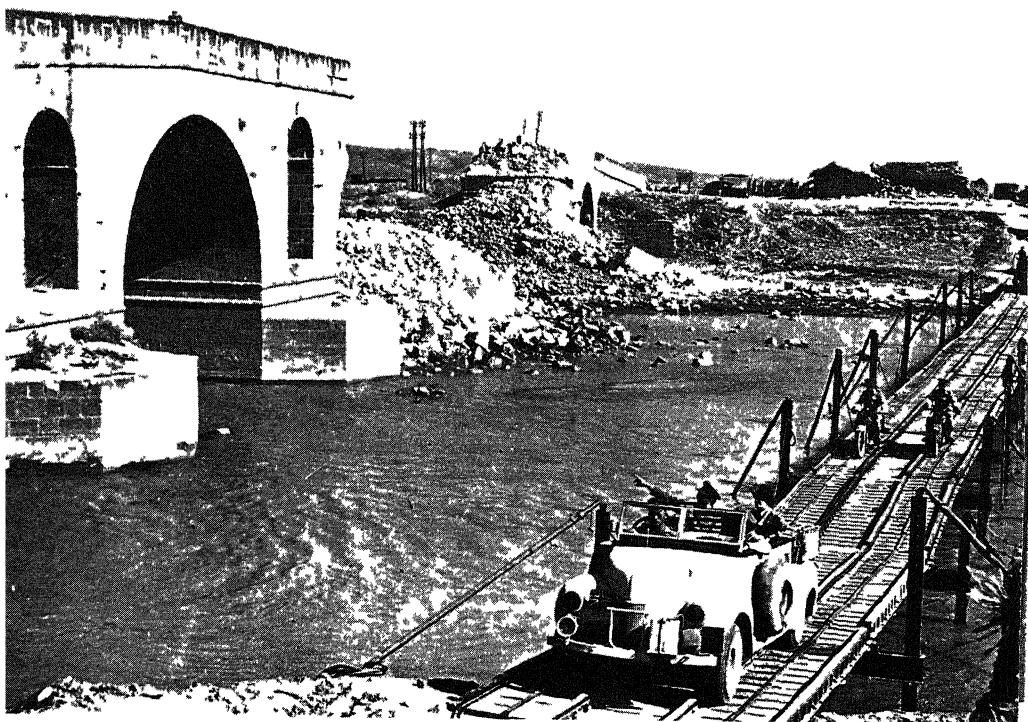
their souls in battle, but to support them in political power would be a dastardly insult to the millions who had suffered in this war.

Militarily speaking, we had learned much. Out of Kasserine and El Guettar and Bizerta had come a battle-experienced nucleus of divisions around which could be built a first-class American army. Britain too had gained a real army, fully the equal of the Eighth, out of the Mejerda Valley. When the time came to strike into Europe, we should have an Allied force of which British and Americans could both be proud. If the lesson in co-operation could last through the war and the years beyond, the debt of both our nations to the men of North Africa would be great.



GENERAL NOGUES (LEFT) WITH GENERAL YAGO

A socialist Press Photo



COMMUNICATIONS WERE DIFFICULT

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ALGIERS IS NOT LARGE AND I DON'T THINK I HAVE EVER HEARD OR SEEN
SUCH CONCENTRATED ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRE



(Associated Press Photo)

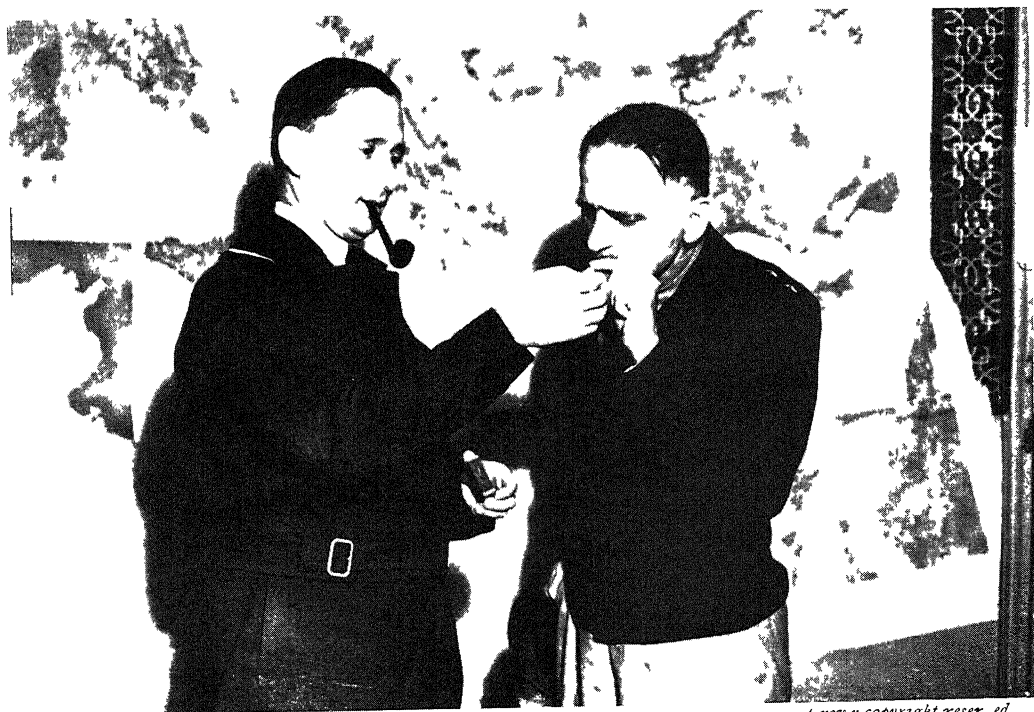
MR. MURPHY GETS A MEDAL—GENERAL EISENHOWER OFFICIATING



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NI AK IOKT LYAUFIV

IT IS A QUIET PLEASANT SPOT



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AIR CHIEF MARSHAL TEDDER GIVES A LIGHT TO GENERAL SPAATZ



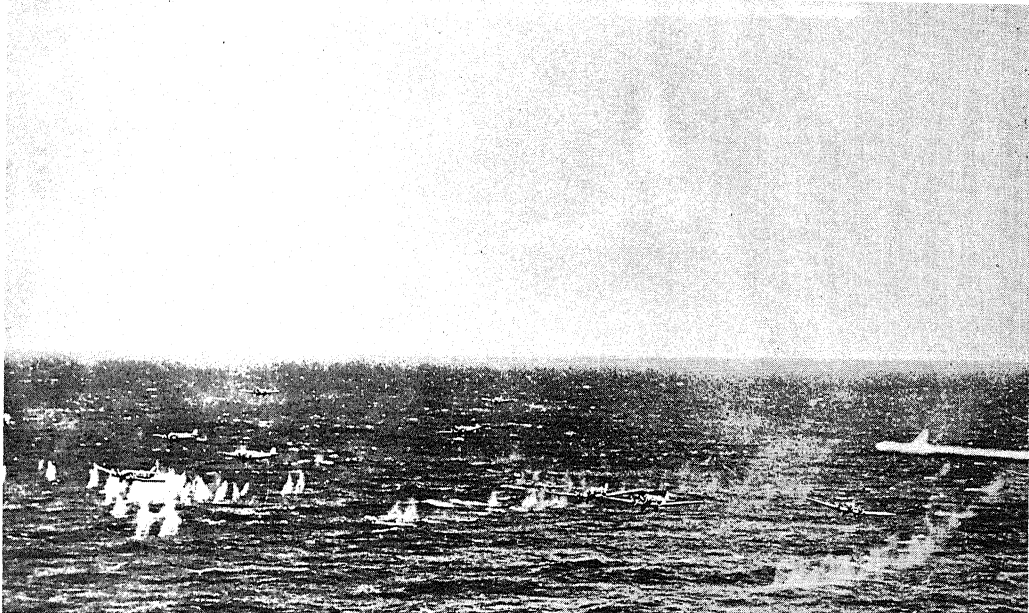
AMERICAN FIRST INFANTRY DIVISION MEN ENTER GAFSA

Associated Press Photo



BRIG.-GEN. ROOSEVELT, MAJ.-GEN. TERRY ALLEN AND LIEUT.-GEN. PATTON
SHARE A FOXHOLE AT EL GUETTAR

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U.S. Official Photo

IN ONE DAY, AMERICAN PLANES CAUGHT AND BLASTED INTO THE SEA
TWENTY-FIVE GERMAN TRANSPORTS CARRYING VITAL SUPPLIES



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GENERAL ANDERSON (LEFT), COMMANDER OF THE BRITISH FIRST ARMY
WITH THE BRIGADIER GENERAL STAFF WHO EXPLAINED THE LAST
OFFENSIVE TO REPORTERS



Gr own copy light & sound

THE GERMANS THAT THE GHURKAS MET IN CLOS COMBAT SUFFEK NO PAIN



British Newsreels Picture

"AT THE EDGE OF THE CEMETARY A GERMAN TANK WAS BURNING AND
YOU COULD SMELL CHARRED FLESH



THE COCKNEY INVARIABLY BEATS HIM OUT OF THE GERMAN IF HE MUST
BE VERY DISILLUSIONING—FOR THE GERMAN'S

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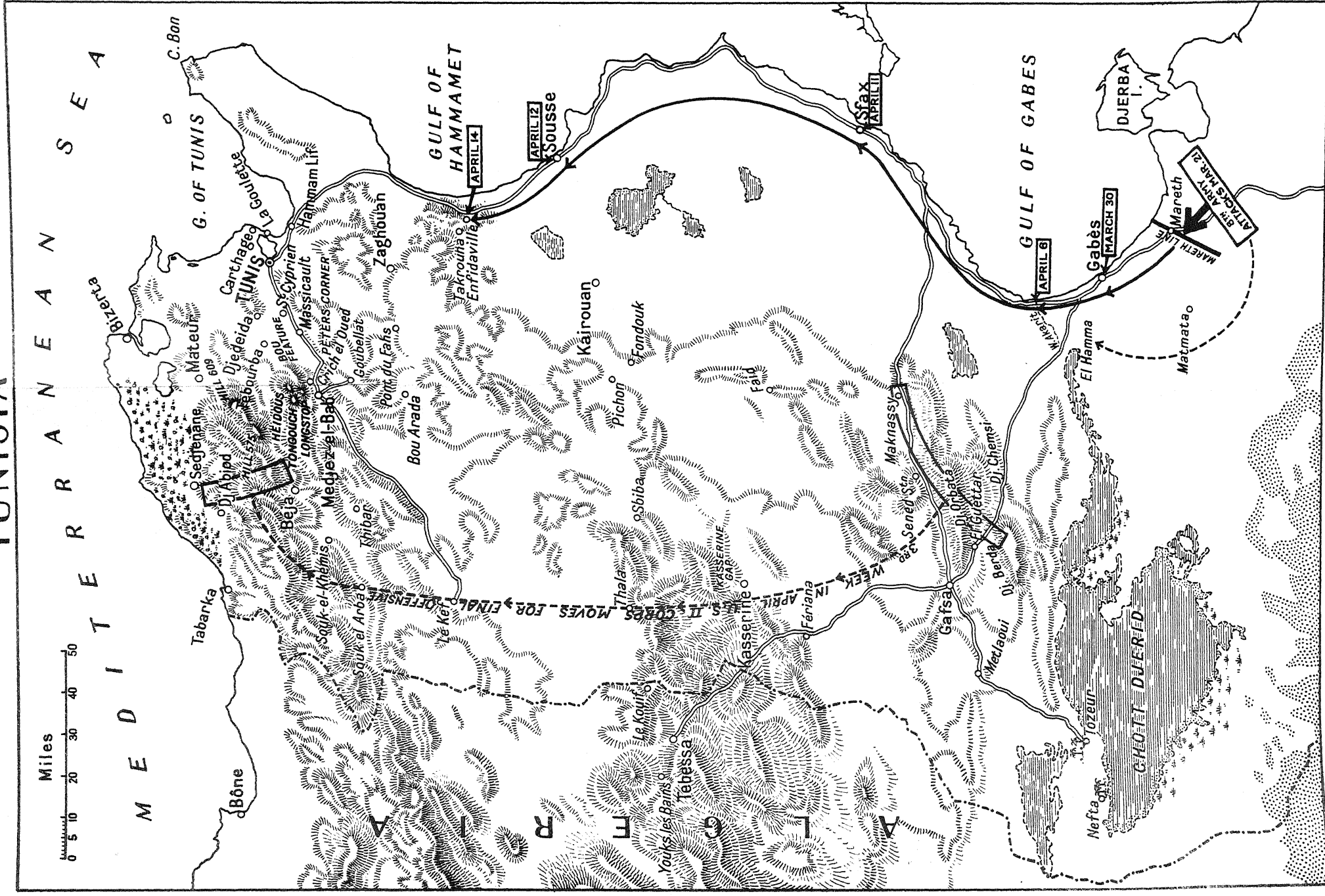
IN TUNIS—'PEOPLE SAW US AND BEGAN CHEERING AND SHOUTING

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